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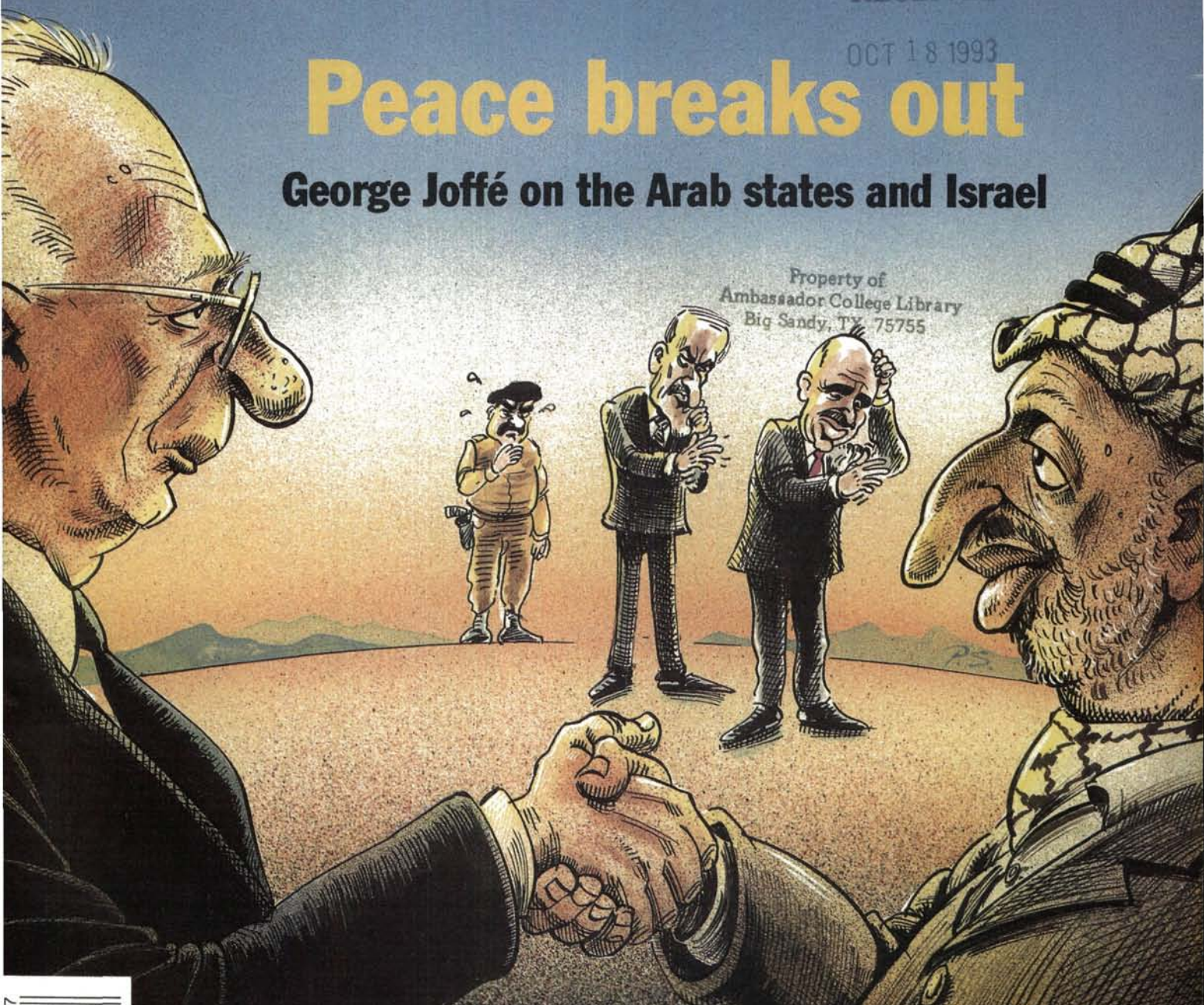

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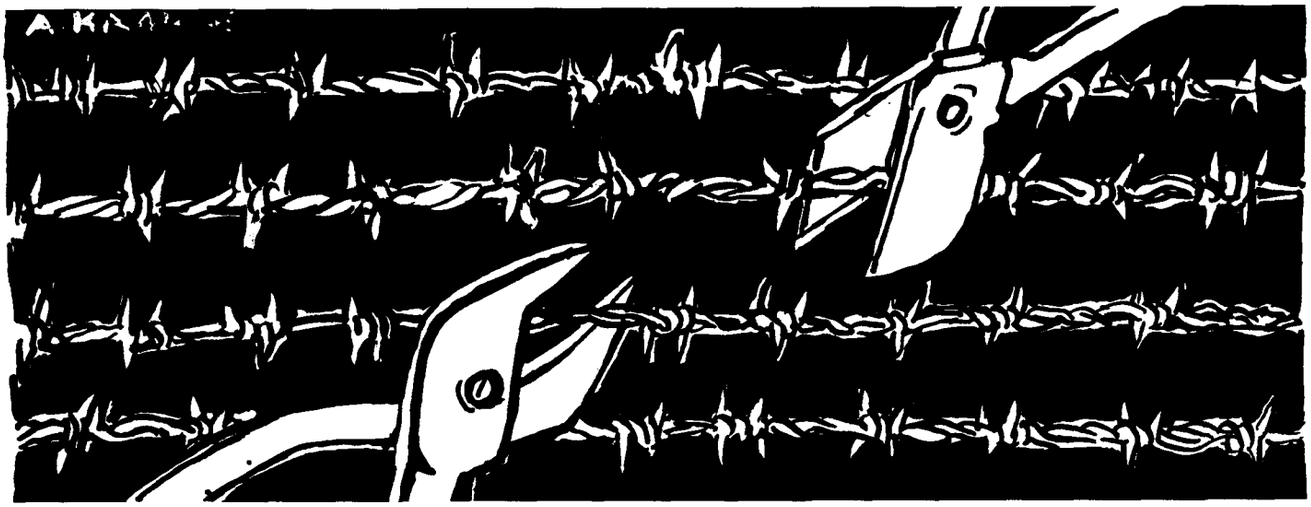

A hope for peace?

The PLO-Israel peace deal signed on Monday in Washington is far from perfect. It gives very little to the Palestinians apart from the hope that it might provide the basis for something better—and it could collapse at any point.

At worst, if opposition to the deal on either side intensifies in the next couple of months, it could fall apart before completion of Israeli military withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank city of Jericho, the first step envisaged in the peace plan. Even if it survives until the Palestinians have elected their representative council—scheduled within nine months, despite the fact that the details of the electoral process and its powers have not yet been agreed—it could easily flounder on the questions deliberately left unresolved until the second and third stages of the process, supposed to be agreed within two to five years.

All the most difficult problems between Israel and the Palestinians have yet to be addressed. Both sides want east Jerusalem, illegally occupied by Israel in 1967 and with a largely Palestinian population (although increasingly settled by Israelis), and neither has shown the slightest willingness to compromise.

The Palestinians are insistent that all Palestinians, including those who no longer live in Israel or the territories seized and occupied in 1967, should have the right to return to Palestine; the Israelis disagree, and once again both sides have shown no signs of being prepared to fudge. The Palestinians want the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories ultimately to come under Palestinian jurisdiction; the Israelis refuse to consider any such thing.

Finally, there are apparently irreconcilable differences over what are usually termed "long-term security arrangements"—in other words, whether the Palestinians should be allowed to have armed forces or whether the Israelis alone should have them—and, perhaps most important of all, what sort of autonomous Palestinian entity emerges from the peace process. The Palestinians want their own independent state; the Israelis insist that the Palestinians become part of some confederal arrangement with Jordan. No one has yet come up with a solution that anyone believes acceptable to both parties.

The peace process could break down on any one of these points. And at any stage, it is vulnerable to the actions of rejectionists on either side, with the PLO the only certain casualty if anything goes wrong. The PLO could all too easily prove incapable of policing the Gaza Strip, where it has been steadily losing support to the Islamic fundamentalists of Hamas since the beginning of the Palestinian intifada in 1987.

If the PLO cannot stop attacks on Israeli settlements in Gaza or raids on Israel proper by rejectionist guerrillas based in Gaza, the response of Israeli public opinion will kill any thoughts of a long-term settlement. If the PLO suppresses Palestinian rejectionists by force of arms, however, it will lose its remaining credibility among the dispossessed in the refugee camps.

On the other hand, if Israel cannot rein in the settlers in the territories, many of whom are committed to defending their dream of Eretz Israel by force of arms, or indeed if the Israeli Labour government falls and is replaced by a Likud-based coalition hostile to any sort of compromise, Palestinians will see no reason to support the peace process, once again undermining the PLO. Yasser Arafat has embraced an extraordinarily high-risk strategy.

But if euphoria is not in order, there *are* ways in which the deal marks a significant symbolic breakthrough. For the first time, Israel has recognised that the Palestinians are a nation with the right to self-determination; for the first time, it has accepted that it has to deal with the PLO if any lasting peace is to come about; for the first time, it has at least opened the door to the possibility that it might have to give up the territories occupied in 1967.

Simply because the Israel-Palestine conflict has gone on for so long without even a glimmer of hope of a solution, this symbolic breakthrough is extremely welcome. It provides hope where before there was only deadlock and despair. The agreement might, just might, be what it has been hailed as, the first step on the long road to the lasting settlement of the Israel-Palestine question, which in turn is the only way of securing a lasting peace in the whole of the Middle East.

The task now for the rest of the world is to do everything possible to ensure that the process does succeed. That means international support for the fledgeling autonomous Palestinian political and judicial institutions (not least in police training) and, crucially, an influx of aid to develop the economic and social infrastructure of the Occupied Territories, which have been starved of investment for 26 years.

Gaza, in particular, is in a desperate state, with nearly a million Palestinians, three-quarters of them refugees, crammed into a patch of land 25 miles long and seven miles wide. Only a quarter of adult males have a full-time job. If the PLO is not to lose control of the Strip, and it must not if this week's agreement is to have any chance of success, Gaza needs large-scale investment at once.

But political and economic support for the Palestinians is not all that is needed. It is just as important for the world to keep up the pressure on Israel to stick with the timetable currently envisaged and to make the bulk of the concessions in the second and third stages of the negotiations, particularly on Jerusalem, the settlements in the Occupied Territories and independent statehood for Palestine. The Palestinians have made nearly all the compromises so far: a just peace demands that Israel responds in kind.

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Labour's electoral quandary

This week has seen the publication of two very different pamphlets on the predicament of the Labour Party.

From the Fabian Society comes *More Southern Discomfort*, by Giles Radice and Stephen Pollard, based on in-depth interviews with "key swing voters" in the south of England (skilled working-class and lower-middle-class people who voted Tory in 1992), which argues that Labour is still not trusted by floating voters and so should go all out for "modernisation".

"Labour cannot afford to be seen as a class- or trade-union dominated party if it is to win the support of floating voters in the south," it concludes. "It must be the party of the individual citizen, the party which, in Tony Blair's words, 'stands up for the individual against the vested interests that hold him or her back, whatever they are'."

Meanwhile, from *Tribune* newspaper comes *What's Left: the future of Labour*, by Peter Hain, based on opinion poll data gathered in the aftermath of last year's general election, which argues that Labour's main problem is that it is losing the support of its core working-class constituency. Instead of distancing itself from the trade unions, it should go all out for an economic policy that convinces workers a Labour government really would make a difference on unemployment, housing and so on.

Far from being the solution, he says, the "moderniser" faction of the party is a major part of the problem. Indeed, he continues, it is in large measure *because* of the ever-increasing blandness of policies advanced by the modernisers that voters don't think that Labour stands for anything distinctive any more and hence don't vote for the party.

So which pamphlet is right? The problem for Labour—and for Fabian right and Tribunite left—is that neither is and both are. Labour lost the last election both because it was not trusted by skilled working-class and lower middle-class voters (the C1s and C2s) *and* because it failed to motivate unskilled working-class voters (the Ds and Es). It failed both because key sections of the electorate thought that its policies were too radical *and* because many voters thought that it really didn't stand for anything any more and would not make the slightest difference if elected. While it is bunk to argue that Labour's links with the trade unions lost the election—the unions' role in Labour politics became a major issue in the past 18 months only after the trade union leaders clumsily bounced John Smith into the leadership of the party after the election defeat, it is equally ridiculous to claim that the party would have fared significantly better in 1992 (or indeed would do better in 1995 or 1996) with a significantly more left-wing programme.

In other words, Labour is in an extremely difficult position. The more it tries to impress southern C1s and C2s that it is safe, the less it can command the belief of Ds and Es that it would make a blind bit of difference if it came to power, and the less it can enthuse its members to campaign. The party desperately needs to find a way of attracting the C1s and C2s without losing the support of the Ds and Es or the commitment of party members.

Neither Hain nor Radice and Pollard provide a convincing way out of the quandary.

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FELIX BENNETT

The Food Minister, Nicholas Soames, may replace Sir Norman Fowler as Conservative Party chairman.

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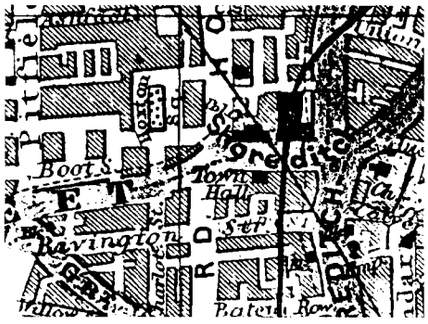

Oh dear, what is happening to CND? Shoreditch can only hope that the idea put forward by Early Warning (Manchester CND's newsletter) of drumming up support for the anti- nuclear rally on 9 October in London (see also Letters, page 28) isn't a harbinger of things to come. First, the newsletter promises that: "There will be no long boring speeches." Second, that after every couple of speakers: "There will be music and singing." Third, Early Warning insists, rather pointedly, that: "There will be no members of Class War shouting in your ear." And they still expect people to turn up? It looks like the Labour Party isn't the only institution riddled with spoil-sport "modernising" types.

Some traditions, mind you, are a little harder to break. In fact the old ways come in very handy for certain occasions—like Democratic Left's TUC conference fringe meeting, at Brighton's Old Ship Hotel last week. Chairing the "Unions: A New Direction" meeting was the affable Mick McGahey. It seems he only just made it, however. After partaking of a conference-style long lunch earlier in the day, the former NUM vice-president was anxiously urged by his assorted Democratic Left chaperones to sleep it off and arise refreshed for the meeting. McGahey steadfastly refused. Eventually, only the direct order "Bed! Now!" from Democratic Left head Nina Temple—who, of course, is McGahey's former Communist Party general secretary—had the required effect. So much for Democratic Left's support of dialogue, grass-roots decision-making, and all the other things they tirelessly bang on about. When it comes down to it, there's nothing like good old party discipline.

Ever since the police force received Home Secretary Michael Howard's permission for a "trial run" of the side-handled Los Angeles-style baton, Shoreditch has been concerned with the great unspoken problem: What to do with the thousands of redundant truncheons that the rhino-whips will replace—which, given the current law'n'order fervour, looks increasingly likely. Step forward, Vigili Urbani; it seems that while British police have long hankered after a harder-hitting replacement for the traditional night stick, Italian traffic police have been clamouring to have our old truncheon introduced as standard equipment for themselves.

According to the Italian force: "There are occasions when such a weapon is enough to break up a fight or any disturbance without having to pull a gun." The potential deal opens up all sorts of exciting commercial possibilities—of which Sheehy would, no doubt, heartily approve. Who knows, perhaps the Italians would also care to take off our hands the surplus stock of 450 senior Scotland Yard officers—which Metropolitan Police Commissioner Paul Condon last week announced are for the chop in order to cut costs.

Probably few people read the *Lancet* for light relief. But if you did, you would have noticed the small item last week on a second farmer to die of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, the version of bovine spongiform encephalopathy ("mad cow disease") that affects humans. The man, like the earlier victim this year, had worked with animals that had BSE, and this included drinking milk from his own cows, even from those that were later found to be infected—as might we all, although in hopefully smaller quantities, since there is no way of knowing when a cow is merely incubating the disease.

About 30 cases of CJD are reported each year in England and Wales (population: 51 million), says the *Lancet*, which means that you have more than a one in two million chance of contracting the disease. There are only 120,000 dairy farmers. But before you cancel your milk, the *Lancet* notes reassuringly that CJD and mad cow disease are "still not associated on statistical grounds". Well, that's a relief. It appears we'll just have to worry about all that six-year-old stockpiled beef instead—which dates back to those good old days when visibly affected cattle were still entering the human food chain—100 tons of which were released to wholesalers recently and which has already reached high-street shops. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food says that the meat is perfectly safe and that there is no way of catching BSE from milk. Phew.

Until a few weeks ago, anyone who claimed to have seen megastar Bob Dylan peering into estate agents' windows in London's Crouch End would have become a prime target of Virginia Bottomley's "care in the community" rapid-action squads. Now, as we all know, the idol of a generation has fallen madly in love wih the area. He wants to join the likes of ex-Eurythmic Dave Stewart and noted NSS-supporter Andy Kershaw as a resident of N8's answer to Beverly Hills.

This strange passion has led to some odd moments. Fellow-diners recently spotted the bard having a quiet curry in the local Indian. Agog with excitement, they pointed the illustrious customer out to a waiter, who didn't turn a hair. "We get all sorts in here," he replied. "We had that Paul Eddington in the restaurant last week." Deep in suburban London, what's 30 years of rock superstardom compared to the real fame of "Yes, Minister"?

FOURTH ESTATE

A regular monitor of the tabloid press

9 September: The *Daily Express* is outraged that the DPP thinks there is a vigilante problem in Britain. "Britain does not have a vigilante problem. It has a crime problem." And what does the paper think is the answer: we have to think of a way of dealing with the growing problem of young children turning to crime. In Birmingham, a "senior policeman" is quoted as unable to "save the local public from the the depredations of a hardened criminal aged all of 13".

10 September: The *Sun*, contemplating possible tax rises, comes up with the ultimate insult: "At times it's hard to believe that this really is a Conservative government."

11 September: The *Daily Express* tries to strike fear into the hearts of its readers: if Labour got back into power, it "would take Britain back to the 'beer and sandwiches' days of the 1970s when union bosses met their PM behind closed doors to carve up the economy". Before readers start getting nostalgic for an economy that someone is doing something about, the paper quickly brings in "perpetual comeback tours by Gary Glitter and the return of flared trousers" into the argument. That's hitting below the belt, surely.

The *Daily Star* carries on with the anti-young criminal, this time a 14-year-old boy. "Lock him up. Keep him locked up. and sack the creeps on the social services' payroll."

12 September: *News of the World*'s Mystic Meg gives her exclusive tarot analysis on the royals. Her prediction? "Prince Andrew will have prostate trouble in later life." Surely this isn't the sort of thing we buy the paper for?

13 September: Just as we had almost forgotten Margaret Thatcher's favourite minister, Cecil Parkinson resurfaces with the news that he took out a gagging injunction against his former mistress Sara Keays. "SARA RISKS JAIL IN TV CECIL ATTACK," *Today* reminds us. "SARA KEAYS: MY FIGHT TO KEEP FLORA—Parkinson 'tried to have our daughter put away'," says the *Daily Mail's* front page.

Time for some man-talk from the *Sun*'s Richard Littlejohn. "Female members of the shadow cabinet are widely regarded as over-promoted—although Mo Mowlam is said to have the best legs in Westminster." But Littlejohn spreads his discrimination evenly: "You could equally say the same about Conservative women. More to the point, have you looked at the Tory men lately? The Prime Minister is a drip who would be out of his depth running a raffle."

14 September: The *Sun* lives up to this historic week for the Middle East by producing "20 things you must know about Yasser of the PLO". The essential facts include: "18: He loves Elvis Presley and old Hollywood movies. His favourites are Doris Day musicals," and "20: Arafat says: 'Maybe one day when I retire, I can get a dog'."

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In the last few years of his life, James Cameron, one of the most celebrated journalists since the war, said that he had never lost the fear that he would one day be found out. Readers, editors, would suddenly realise that Cameron couldn't write, and he would immediately become unemployable, his reputation irretrievably destroyed.

You would never hear a surgeon or an electrician or a concert pianist make such a confession, because they are insulated from the rest of the world by a certain level of practical skill. Writers are not protected in this way. Most of the people reading this could write a passage of English prose that would be no worse than that produced by many people who write for a living. There are journals—the record-reviewing magazine *Q* is one example—in which the wittiest, most intelligent writing is to be found on the letters page. On the other hand, if you are untrained, you cannot remove an appendix or play a sonata or rewire a house, however sensitive or intelligent you are.

But the professional structures through which trained people progress can be the opposite of a guarantee of quality. As we have seen recently, a pathologist whose multiple sclerosis appears to have affected her competence was shielded by colleagues. A useless academic can be protected by tenure. Plenty of celebrated ministers and highly paid businessmen have their work done for them by their subordinates. Trade unions have been known to guarantee the employment of incompetent or even criminal members. There are many writers who are both less talented and richer than James Cameron who have benefited from being rewritten by publishers and sub-editors, and this doesn't apply only to writers of thrillers and romances. I will be interested, for example, to see Margaret Drabble's forthcoming biography of Angus Wilson, because for many years there were rumours in the literary world that novels of his had to be substantially rewritten.

There are very few professions where figures even at the very top cannot be denounced as frauds and fools. A J Ayer has dismissed Martin Heidegger's philosophy as without value or interest. There are classical music soloists who owe their prominence more to their looks and the efforts of their record companies than to any transcendent talent.

Are there any activities that give no place to hide, in which reputations cannot be artificially inflated?

The answer must be mainly in games and sports, and this may account for some of their appeal. The career of a boxer can frequently be eased by dishonest promotions, fixed contests and bribed judges. A footballer of limited talent can be carried by a team. But a game like tennis, in which individuals compete in tournaments, does approach some sort of objectivity. To say that Ivo Pogorelich is an overrated pianist might entail an argument about the wilfulness or otherwise of his musical technique. But to assert that Pete Sampras is an overrated tennis player is much like denying that Everest is a high mountain or that the Pacific is a wide ocean.

In chess there are no false excuses, reflects **Sean French**

The most satisfyingly objective of all such activities is chess. There were elements of the preamble to the current World Championship contest between Gary Kasparov and Nigel Short that I found distasteful. The money squabbles were self-serving, and the mutual insults before the game seemed like an embarrassing attempt to create a little spurious controversy. However, *Private Eye*'s attack on the coverage of the event by its sponsors, the *Times*, exposed little except the *Eye*'s own philistine shallowness. In the past few years, we have seen newspapers trying to attract readers by shoddy exposés or forms of lottery. By contrast, there is something entirely endearing about a quality newspaper attempting to attract new readers by the extent of its coverage of a chess tournament. It marks a welcome move back upmarket by the *Times* and I suspect that this coverage, along with its drop in cover price, may be effective in attracting new readers. What journalistic innovations would meet *Private Eye*'s lofty standards? More lifestyle features and profiles of Paul Merton and Ian Hislop?

Last week, the match began and nothing else mattered. It was just the two men, a board, a clock and nothing else. There are no hidden cards in chess, you can't hit the post or benefit from a net-cord, there is no kick, no run of the dice, no low punch, no argument about whether the ball really crossed the line, no replay to establish whether the pads were really in front of the stumps, the ball can't wobble on the lip of the hole, there is no weight advantage, steroids are useless, the wind and the sun or the heaviness of the going need not be taken into account.

Everything is on view on the 64 squares, which makes the game the closest one can get to thought in action, and for this reason it is a game that works supremely well on television. It shares the structural simplicity of other celebrated TV sports like darts and snooker, but those two sports demand only limited discussion while they are in progress. The commentator can speculate whether Stephen Hendry will go for position on the pink and the black or inform us that Jocky Wilson needs a triple 19 and a double top to finish, but interpretation is central to the chess board, which is is both lucid and opaque. We can see all the pieces, but who has the initiative? It has been constantly instructive to hear grandmasters arguing about who is winning, or even about what on earth is going on. Behind every game are all the ghost games that might have been, and much of the interest lies in the possible variations, the traps that have been narrowly avoided, the offers of material that have been nervously refused.

I've previously followed great chess players through their published games, and the surprise for me has been the rhythm of the matches, the shifts from periods of reflection to hectic scrambles to get moves played before the time limit. On Saturday, Nigel Short had a minute to play ten moves. He had sacrificed a knight in order to attack Kasparov's king and it was agonising to see him failing to make the decisive assault. One analyst cruelly pointed out the move Short should have made, one that he would have spotted if he had had more than five seconds.

There is something peculiarly painful and exposed about a loss at chess, like being mugged on a psychiatrist's couch. Yet some of the most impressive pictures of all were after Kasparov's victory, showing the two at the board calculating variations, their hands moving pieces with baffling speed, showing despite all the competitiveness a shared interest in the objective possibilities, the lost beauties and opportunities of the match they had just played. I'm hooked.

And from the sublime to the, well, somewhat less than sublime. This Saturday, your correspondent will be captaining a *New Statesman & Society* cricket team against a team apparently composed of Labour Party members in Huntingdon, John Major's constituency. Based on my scrutiny of the *NSS*, I can see just three grounds for optimism. The first is that the Labour vote in Huntingdon at the last election was not large, and therefore the reserves of talent available to the opposition may not be substantial. The second is that the sky is looking distinctly autumnal and we may expect the ball not merely to swing dangerously, but to splash bafflingly. And the third is that Jaci Stephen is unable to play, which recalls the Marx Brothers' negotiation with MGM when preparing to make their first film after Zeppo had left the team. Surely the fee should be different, now they were only three, a studio executive ventured. "Yeah," replied Groucho, "without Zeppo we're worth twice as much."

As Sir Henry Newbolt wrote about a similarly dramatic cricket match: "And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat/Or the selfish hope of a season's fame/But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote/Play up! play up! and play the game!" Or, in this case, "Pay up! pay up! and help the *New Statesman & Society* defence fund."

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That's the wonder of Walworth

Everyone is the better for a good laugh on a wet Monday morning, and *Guardian* readers were fortunate at the beginning of this week. Their favourite newspaper had on its front page—with suitably detailed backup inside—an account of a secret report from two management consultants on the workings of Labour Party headquarters at Walworth Road. It made entertaining reading.

Don't misunderstand me—I'm not seeking to mock the story. It was a thoroughly good scoop, of a sort that the *Guardian* has made its own. So much so, indeed, that one begins to feel that no piece of paper can pass from room to room in Walworth Road, the Department of Social Security, the Ministry of Transport, the BBC or any other similar institution without a copy falling into the hands of a *Guardian* reporter. In effect, it is a do-it-yourself version of open government that goes some way towards filling the gap left by William Waldegrave's failure to deliver Mr Major's promises on the Citizen's Charter.

But what made the report comical was the content of the leaked memorandum. For its two highly qualified authors—one of whom apparently found it necessary to use a pseudonym—concluded that Labour HQ was inefficient, obsessed with internal politics and staffed by too many second-raters.

To which the only possible response is to ask why it took the two consultants a whole year to make this astonishing discovery? Everyone in and around the Labour movement has known this for as many years as I have been on the scene, which is about 40. It was true when the party was based in Transport House. It is still true in Walworth Road.

Indeed, there have been earlier reports that reached similar conclusions. The most famous of these was Harold Wilson's survey of party organisation after the 1955 general election defeat. With his natural eye for a phrase, Wilson reported that Labour was "still at the penny-farthing stage in a jet-propelled era". He also threw in a quotation from Keir Hardie, no less: "Perfect your organisation . . . and the future is yours."

It made no perceptible difference, for Labour lost again in 1959. In the words of Ben Pimlott, the Wilson report "remained a monument to what should have happened, rather than what did". He says in his biography of Wilson that the penny-farthing machine at Transport House continued to exercise "the power of veto through inertia".

I have not the least doubt that John Smith is painfully familiar with all this, and has been since he first became a professional politician. Indeed, he is in a position to know just how much worse party organisation is in Scotland than it is in England. As he must know, membership north of the border is not just depressingly low, as it is in England; it is frighteningly low in some key constituencies.

But if a hollow laugh is my immediate response to the latest exposure of the Labour Party's inefficiency, please do not jump to the conclusion that I think nothing either can or should be done. Clearly something must be done. The question, however, is what.

Assuming we are justified in drawing firm conclusions from the *Guardian* report, a few ideas for action were implicit in the memorandum submitted by the two outside consultants. It is only a partial parody of their view to say that they appear to think people like them ought to hire and fire Walworth Road's staff, so as to eliminate irrelevant considerations like politics. Never mind that this might threaten the authority of the elected national executive committee; it's in a good cause.

Then they identify the problem of all those members of the shadow cabinet and the NEC who waste valuable time and energy winning their own internal party elections when they should be winning general elections. The report apparently suggests the shadow cabinet could be elected less frequently, and that the NEC might be improved if it were smaller and met less often.

One can't help wondering why the report stops short of abolition of the shadow cabinet and NEC

Indeed, one can't help wondering why the report stops short of genuine radicalism, such as the total abolition of the shadow cabinet and the NEC. That would leave Mr Smith free to construct an effective, non-political party machine dedicated to putting Labour back into office.

Do I hear someone complaining at this point that my joke is getting a bit far-fetched? Well, maybe it is. But all I am trying to suggest is that most recent proposals for galvanising Labour's celebrated penny-farthing machine boil down in the end to an attempt to make Labour much more like the Conservatives.

Conservative Central Office really is an organisation dedicated to winning general elections, and it does so unhampered by internal democracy. Its chairman owes his job exclusively to the party leader, which means everyone working under him also looks ultimately to the leader for preferment.

Yet, by some curious coincidence, this same Conservative Party happens also to be engaged in a massive reorganisation programme designed to cut the staggering deficit it has run up in the cause of electoral success. Some of its employees have also been called second-rate, there have been wholesale sackings in Smith Square, and more are on the way. While its unelected chairman swings his axe, grass-roots members are even demanding he becomes elected and accountable to them.

Just what these daring rebels are up against was made clear this week with the publication of Kenneth Baker's enormous volume of self-justification (*The Turbulent Years*, Faber, £20). He records how, when Margaret Thatcher appointed him party chairman in 1989, he pledged his total and unswerving personal loyalty to her, saying that this had to be the essential bedrock of their relationship.

He explains that in any Conservative government there are two crucial relationships—the Prime Minister with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Prime Minister with the chairman of the party. "If the first is not right then the government will soon fall apart. If the second is not right then the party in the country and in the Commons will soon fall apart," he says.

This may well be true, but it is not a situation that is ever likely to exist in the Labour Party, even if some former party leaders might have liked it that way. The simple truth is that there is not going to be an upheaval that involves dismantling important features of the party's traditional elective structure this side of the next election—or the one after that, either.

That does not rule out other changes at Walworth Road, including the sacking of some of those second-raters, most of whom are quite easily identified. The problem in the past has not been knowing who to sack, but getting round to doing it. It is no discredit to a party that advocates worker protection, shop-floor consultation, union representation and the like, that it has always found this difficult. All too often it has relied on voluntary redundancies—a course that means the best go and the worst stay.

To be realistic, this week's report was probably intended to serve more as a firecracker up Walworth Road's breeks than as a serious prescription for action. In the meantime, the latest Fabian Society survey of voters' attitudes in the south-east makes it plain that finding a credible economic policy is a sight more urgent than jollying up the party bureaucrats.

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Bosnia let down at UN

For two years Germany has been campaigning to have the site of the United Nations Development Programme moved from New York to Bonn. It would be far more fitting for the country to offer Munich as the site for the Security Council, so that Britain and France could do their Neville Chamberlain imitation over Bosnia in an historically fitting venue.

Last week in New York, the players mounted a successful, if cynical, double bill at the Security Council. First, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali officially nominated a candidate for prosecutor at the Yugoslav War Crimes Tribunal to the Security Council. The British, French and Russians indicated that they would veto his suggestion, Professor Cherif Bassiouni of Chicago's De Paul University. The Americans nominally supported him, but with the same outstanding lack of fervour shown by President Bill Clinton for the resolution to lift the arms embargo on Bosnia.

Officially, the opposition to Professor Bassiouni was based on his lack of experience as a prosecutor. In fact, diplomats candidly admit that his real problem is an excess of efficiency. He is a year ahead of any other potential candidate in assembling war crimes evidence—and among the chief suspects are the "leaders" to whom David Owen and the west are urging the Bosnians to surrender most of their country. Explaining his interest, Bassiouni told me, "It's hard to look in the eyes of a 15 year old who has been raped for six months, or someone who has been imprisoned and tortured, and just walk away."

Of course, he was speaking in a personal capacity. The evidence indicates that many European statesmen have no such difficulty. Presumably, however, it would embarrass even the shameless Douglas Hurd to roll out the red carpet for men who are on the UN's wanted list for genocide and war crimes. After all, the unruly press might mention the fact. But Hurd moves in mysterious ways, since it was John Major's government that inadvertently financed Bassiouni's research. As chief rapporteur to the UN Commission Investigating War Crimes, Bassiouni overcame UN bureaucracy and inertia by getting funding from George Soros, the billionaire who made a killing of selling sterling short last year.

The Security Council had set up the Commission because press reports of events in the Balkans made it plain that crimes were being committed, and so something had to be seen to be done to allay public opinion. But the commission was not given the wherewithal to investigate, one assumes for the same reasons that make Bassiouni an unsuitable candidate.

Having vetoed him, the Security Council is now considering a compromise candidate. Currently, the favourite is someone from Brazil—an inauspicious choice in view of the country's dubious record in not prosecuting ecocide and genocide.

The message is clear—we don't care—and it was repeated, with especial cruelty, to Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic when he went to the Security Council on 7 September. His demands were the most modest conceivable. Asking the Council to implement its own resolutions, he sought the use of force against those who impede humanitarian convoys; the threat of airstrikes to enforce an end to military activity; and action to make the laughably termed "safe" areas safe. All these points are enshrined in the 50 or so Security Council resolutions for which Britain and France voted.

Finally, while reluctantly admitting that Bosnia would be partitioned, he asked the Security Council to consider that the present "peace" proposals implied that 50 per cent of the population would be forced to live on an unviable 29 per cent of the territory. Even then, however, he promised that, whatever size it was, in the future Bosnian republic, "no one will be persecuted because of their religion, ethnicity, or political beliefs".

There was not a hint of dampness in the eyes of the European diplomats who filed out afterwards without having said a word. French ambassador Jean Bernard Merimee dismissively referred to the president as sounding like a beggar, which came badly from someone who had played such a large part in reducing Bosnia to penury. United States ambassador Madeline Albright, the only diplomat to speak after Izetbegovic, ran after Sir David Hannay of the UK, declaring herself to be "stunned, stunned. Why didn't you, say anything?" In fact, Sir David had already requested a meeting with the Bosnian president—and had suggested earnestly that he return to the peace talks.

Next, Izetbegovic flew to Washington, to get the cold shoulder from Clinton, who has decided that Bosnia is not a poll-boosting decision. Indeed, Clinton informed the Bosnian president that John Major had told him that, if the arms embargo were lifted, the Conservative government would fall. Bosnia, a small country, far away, is to be left to its own devices so that the small grey men around Major can maintain the dubious perks of office in the face of disdain at home and abroad. But, of course, that's just the press talking.

Ian Williams

60 YEARS AGO

"Dr Dollfuss shows his hand"
16 September 1933

The New Statesman comments on the Austrian dictator's plans for his country

Dr Dollfuss has now told us pretty plainly what he is driving at. His speech in Vienna on Monday was very carefully phrased, and he did not mention the horrid word fascism. But fascism, as we predicted in these columns last week, it is to be—a corporative, or guild, state on the Italian model, though with rather more medievalism and religion about it. Democracy, of course, has already gone; parliamentary government was suspended in Austria six months ago, and will not be restored. There remains the elimination of Marxism, which means the destruction of the Social Democratic and Communist parties, the existing trade unions and the popular regime in Vienna. All this may perhaps be achieved by nicer methods than have been employed in Germany; on the other hand, it may not be such a kid-glove affair as Dr Dollfuss hopes, on the assumption presumably that the Socialists will prefer extinction by him rather than by the Nazis. And what about the Nazis? They may be taken to represent about one-third of the Austrian people, and although they are temporarily suppressed they have all Hitler's Germany behind them. Hitler's Germany, biding its time and perhaps modifying its policy a little, might easily succeed in absorbing Dollfuss's Austria.

Estrangement in paradise

Russia might have given up the practice of sending dissidents to Siberia—but internal banishment can still befall those who step out of line in the Maldives, a country of more than 1,000 equatorial coral islands set in the aquamarine of the Indian Ocean.

Last week, the main political rival to President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, his brother-in-law Ilyas Ibrahim, was sentenced in absentia to 15½ years internal exile after being found guilty of having violated the constitution by attempting to influence the vote for the nomination of the president and of having broken his ministerial oath. Power, as we know, is stronger than blood relations.

Gayoom and Ibrahim had been wrestling for control of this Sunni Muslim nation, an hour's flying south-west of Sri Lanka, for some time. The victor emerged late last month when the result of the parliamentary vote to nominate a single candidate for the presidency was announced. Gayoom bagged 28 votes to Ibrahim's 18, and now goes alone before the people in a national referendum due on 1 October in which he is sure to be endorsed as president for a fourth consecutive term of office.

Although the president has survived three coup attempts—the most serious was in 1988 when a force of seaborne mercenary troops hired by a Maldivian businessman was event-

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NEWS FROM ELSEWHERE

ually rounded up by Indian paratroopers after Gayoom hid and telephoned Rajiv Gandhi for help—last month's parliamentary vote was the closest shave that Gayoom has had in his 15-year rule. Take away the votes of the president's nominated eight MPs, and he would have won by only a whisker.

The closeness of the result reflects both the effectiveness of Ibrahim's campaign and Gayoom's waning popularity as change has swept the Maldives.

A new prosperity has been born. In the capital, Male, where more than a quarter of the country's 200,000 people are packed into 1.7 square kilometres, the narrow streets are clogged with air-conditioned Japanese cars and radio taxis that hardly ever get out of second gear.

The *per capita* income of the country has grown from US$200 to US$650 in the past 15 years and everyone is employed, largely thanks to tourism. Over the past two decades, the tropical perfection of the Maldives has become an exclusive destination for rich tourists. Tourism brings in a quarter of the government's revenue.

But the wave of new riches has not washed over all the islands. Some schools and clinics have been built on the distant islands, where people make a living chiefly from pole fishing for tuna and skipjack, but development has lagged behind the capital and its hinterislands. As the minister of atolls administration from early 1991, Ibrahim exploited this, using his powers of patronage to build a strong base among the atoll chiefs who hold the key to political support on the atolls and in parliament.

Ibrahim paid the price for his own success. In the lead up to the election, Gayoom removed him from office, and charges were brought against him. In one case a woman was tried for allegedly using witchcraft to help Ibrahim's cause.

Not that Ibrahim should necessarily be seen as an injured innocent. A wealthy politician and businessman who once ran the State Trading Corporation, he abruptly left the country in 1990 when he was about to appear before an inquiry into the misappropriation of government funds. Three months later he returned, and was soon back in Gayoom's government, apparently cleared of guilt.

This time round, however, it looks like the family estrangement is more complete. The severity of the banishment, and a further two outstanding charges of financial impropriety, suggest that Ibrahim's days in politics are over. Nor will he be missed by the liberal, well-travelled elite of Male, for whom he represents an anti-democratic political old guard: Gayoom, they say, is more of a democrat, who has promised to make the government more accountable to the people.

With Ibrahim out of the way, they might just be right. But Gayoom has made promises of greater democracy before, and every time they have been abandoned. Even now many Maldivians cannot believe that they have seen the last of Ibrahim.

Steve Percy

LETTER FROM SAXONY

At the bottom of Jochen Krebs' lovingly nurtured garden, the European Community ends and eastern Europe begins. A small stream marks the exact line of separation. Hop across its entire width of 70 centimetres and you're in the Czech Republic. A few months ago, 12 men hopped in the opposite direction, into what was until 1991 the German Democratic Republic: once in Krebs' garden, they walked over to his Trabant car, picked it up, and jumped back over the stream again. Using his binoculars, Krebs can see the vehicle, now adorned with a Czech registration plate, being driven about in the Czech Republic.

Krebs lives in Ebersbach, a small Saxon town of 13,000 residents in an area where the German-Czech border runs through fields, villages and back gardens. There's nothing he can do to recover his car: there's so far no cooperation agreement between Germany and the Czech Republic allowing German police to pursue suspected Czech criminals back into their country.

In recent months, more and more of them have been slipping across the border and back again laden with stolen goods. Living just a stone's throw to the wrong side of an EC border means there are tempting morsels on offer for such criminals: four car tyres, for instance, fetch the equivalent of a teacher's monthly wage in the Czech Republic.

People here are beginning to develop racist values, and many are going to vote for the extreme right

Understandably, the locals, themselves only just emerging from eastern bloc poverty, are up in arms. Last year, the crime rate in the region rose by no less than 268 per cent; many residents have reacted by buying small weapons and security alarms. After six break-ins, one bicycle dealer was so desperate that he electrified the threshold of his shop. Unwanted visitors now get a 380-volt "greeting".

Many have awoken to strange noises in the night. "I went outside to check everything was okay," says 54-year-old Ebersbach grocer Klaus Fritz, "and in the courtyard, I was attacked by a gypsy. Then I saw two men run away and escape over the border. A week later, we caught another five Czech gypsies in the shop. They'd just taken everything they could off the shelves."

Fritz, soft-spoken but increasingly bitter, lives with his wife and 32-year-old son Günther in a house on the main road through the village. For one-and-a-half kilometres, the road runs parallel to the border; his grocery and Günther's newly opened small weapons and security alarms shop ("business is very good") stands on the roadside some 50 metres from the Czech Republic.

A brand-new alarm hangs high on the wall in the hallway of the Fritz family's house, a starting pistol is kept in a cupboard drawer by the front door. Fritz senior takes out a neatly kept notebook and tells of 34 break-ins and 28 attempted break-ins since October last year. "Some houses have been targeted up to five times. Life's become a nightmare, people daren't leave home, they don't go on holiday, all that's passé."

Fritz and his neighbours have written to politicians asking for assistance. But the tenor of their replies was disappointing: "Within the framework of newly acquired freedoms," wrote Saxony's interior ministry, "the situation is no longer favourable for pervasive state-organised security." So Ebersbach's residents organised their own security.

Günther takes us to the small stream that is the border. "This is where we started our patrols. A group of us walked up and down this stretch every night, armed with warning pistols, flashlights and courage. In the rest of Germany, there's an average of one police officer for every 400 people. But here we've just one policeman for about 2,500 residents. Politicians say it's all because of the difference in living standards between us and the Czechs. But Bavaria's always had a border with the Czech Republic. The truth is that those same politicians have underestimated and neglected the problem of crime here."

The government's failure to react quickly to a relatively small problem is another detail in ever-worsening picture of eastern Germans' disaffection with their political representatives. With a general election due next year, the established parties have begun to jostle for position on law and order. But in towns on the German-Czech border affected by cross-border crime, this may be too late to win back voters.

"More and more people here sympathise with parties on the extreme right," says Heinz-Georg Glanthe, the Christian Democrat mayor of Grorschonau, another border town visited by daylight robbery. "Many of the sympathisers are people who're old enough to remember what it's like to be ruled by a strong hand."

Back in Ebersbach, Klaus Fritz sips at his coffee and tells of how in 1990 he too voted for the Christian Democrats (in an election largely won with the support of east Germans enthusiastic about Helmut Kohl's promises of prosperity). But with many promises unfulfilled, Fritz has lost faith in the government.

"The mood's changing in the whole region. It's not just the material damage we've suffered. The real damage is to people's opinions and values. People here are beginning to develop racist atittudes, and many are going to vote for the extreme right."

Christopher Springate

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Gary Calton

Highfields in Leicester has two community centres in the same street. The council wants to merge them. But **Kirsty Milne** finds local people are bitterly opposed

A tale of two centres

The parachute undulates like a thing alive. Thirty small children are holding it by the rim and shrieking for all their lungs are worth. Every so often, one of them makes a dash under the billowing silk, like a miniature explorer in a moving moonscape.

This is the holiday playscheme at Highfields Youth and Community Centre, in Leicester. The children are as multiracial as Highfields itself. Little girls wear gold-embroidered Punjabi trousers; little boys sport Muslim prayer caps or *topis*. A white child in dungarees bounces up and down with his Afro-Caribbean neighbour, her hair lovingly dressed in tiny twisted pigtails.

Upstairs, elderly Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus smoke and play poker together. In a quiet classroom, women whose first language is Gujarati, Urdu or Bengali pore over books in English. At night, the building vibrates to the sound of the local steel band. It seems the very model of a multicultural centre.

But Highfields Youth and Community Centre is fighting for its life. Leicestershire county council wants to merge it with the Moat Centre, a converted Victorian school with better facilities just a few minutes down the road. The merger plan is the climax of a long-standing feud between HYCC and the county council, which provides 95 per cent of the centre's funding. At issue is the question: who decides what's best for the community—and how is that "community" defined?

Highfields is in better physical condition than many inner-city areas, and the daytime atmosphere is relaxed. Huge, shale-coloured tower blocks rise above neat terraced houses. Elderly slippered Muslims shuffle past grocers selling chapatti flour and fresh root ginger. You would not guess that police cars were burned here during the riots of 1981.

But no one disputes that Highfields needs help. The shiny Job Centre is an ominous reminder that unemployment stands at 33 per cent, the highest in the county. "There are no major employers, no big factories," says Dave Purdey, director of the Leicester Racial Equality Council. "The jobs are not there, the training is not there, and there are precious few facilities. The row over merger has become a symbolic battle about how you survive in an area like this."

Abdul Osman, the young chair of HYCC's management committee, was elected as a Labour county councillor in May on an anti-merger ticket. "Over the past 20 years, we have built up a tradition as a family-orientated, multicultural centre," he explains. "Merger would destroy all that."

Since merger was proposed two and a half years ago, HYCC has used every delaying tactic at its disposal. "Our plans to appoint a head for the new joint centre have been aborted three times," says Keith Wood-Allum, Leicestershire's director of education. "We've never even got as far as placing the ad."

The centre even took the council to court, claiming that local people had not been properly consulted about the merger. HYCC failed to get a judicial review, but the council was forced to put out a fresh consultation paper. This was sent to community groups during the 1992 summer holidays, attracting a 10 per cent response rate. It was promptly condemned as "fraudulent" by HYCC.

On the face of it, merger makes sense. The two centres are on the same street; it takes a couple of minutes to walk from one to the other. HYCC, a purpose-built youth centre, is part of a 1970s shopping precinct; the Moat is a big Victorian school, impressively refurbished by the county council at a cost of £1 million. The idea was to move youth work into HYCC, while using the Moat for training, adult education, and playgroups.

From County Hall, four miles away, this might have seemed a rational way of coordinating services and avoiding overlap. But Conservatives and Liberal Democrats—who voted the merger through a hung council in the face of Labour opposition—reckoned without conditions on the ground.

The Moat has space and facilities that would turn most community workers green with envy. But the place has acquired a scandalous reputation. Left largely unsupervised by the council, it has become known as a drug-infested home for militant black youth—with an Islamic enclave in the basement.

Visiting the Moat is a peculiar experience. All development plans have been put on hold until the merger row is resolved, so there is virtually no one in the building until 5pm. But in the evening, the Moat has a double life. Downstairs, bearded imams can be found teaching the Koran to classes of small Muslim children. A "mosque room" is laid with carpets and strung with coloured lights.

Upstairs, things are rather different. Members of the Red Star youth group are playing basketball, working the fruit machines, or lounging around. Originally a club for Asian youth, Red Star is now mainly Afro-Caribbean. The group's founders staked a claim to the Moat in the early 1980s, and occupied the building when the council tried to evict them.

The Moat's reputation has made merger unpopular with users of Highfields Youth and Community Centre. Some mothers are worried about their children being sent to the Moat under the new arrangements. Muslim teenagers who meet and play football at HYCC are nervous about the prospect of Red Star arriving in the building. HYCC staff fear that the delicate task of persuading Asian parents to let their daughters attend the centre will become impossible.

The Moat scandal reached a climax in July, with a leaked report from the education department. A senior officer, Adam Suddaby, wrote: "The centre is proving to be a focus for

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Together but apart: far left, The Moat Centre; left, Highfields Youth and Community Centre

inter-communal conflict: there have been a number of incidents of violence, some of them involving children; drugs [later defined as cannabis and crack] are regularly used on the premises and indeed the centre is used by drug dealers."

Suddaby also criticised the use of the Moat as a mosque, pointing out that a *laissez-faire* attitude to hiring rooms was causing conflict between Muslims and Afro-Caribbeans. The council responded by bringing in private security guards, at a cost of £5,000, and asking Muslims not to use rooms solely for prayer.

It seems only fair to give Red Star's side of the story. They *are* intimidating, as are any group of young men doing nothing at night. "Has anyone brandished a knife at you this evening?" demands one. "Has anyone offered you crack? It's just stereotyping of black youth. People are trying to make divisions between us and the Asians. But we went to school with the Asians. They're our brothers."

To add to the council's headaches, Red Star declare they have no desire to move to HYCC; they plan to stay precisely where they are. "All this talk about buildings," complains a Red Star regular. "But where's the funding for the youth?"

Although the Moat fiasco has embarrassed the council—and supplied welcome ammunition for HYCC—it has not persuaded councillors to ditch the merger. On the contrary, supporters see it as an argument for steaming ahead. "The sooner we get those two operations working for the man in the street, the better," says Bob Pritchard, leader of the Liberal Democrat group. "It's simply not cost-effective to have them competing instead of cooperating. I just wish those with influence in Highfields would help us towards a positive outcome, instead of behaving so negatively."

"Negative" is a word that could fairly be applied to the stream of vitriolic press releases put out by HYCC's management committee, featuring routine attacks on the council in general and Wood-Allum in particular. But thick files of correspondence show that such acrimony is nothing new.

The centre's controversial head, Priya Thamotheram, was temporarily suspended in 1989. Members of his own staff had criticised him in a letter to the director of education. Wood-Allum will not disclose what the criticisms were, except to say that a review by education officers found "nothing to justify any disciplinary action". After seven months, Thamotheram was reinstated; but the episode did not sweeten relations with his employer.

A strong but obsessive character, Thamotheram is a dedicated worker and a formidable lobbyist: in the fight to save the centre, he has won the support of Gus John, Hackney's respected black director of education. He has, however, infuriated Conservative and Liberal Democrats by defying council policy on merger. "He's an able but very difficult man," says Conservative councillor Ernie White. "A succession of people who've tried to work with him have found that if they didn't toe his line they were marginalised and even persecuted. But we didn't cook up the merger as a way of getting rid of him. If we wanted to get rid of Priya, we would sack him. On the contrary, I hope he applies for the job as head of the new centre."

That job has still not been advertised. A blocking motion by the Labour group means that the merger will again come before the full council at the end of the month. The planned start-date for the new operation has already been put back from 1 January to 1 April 1994.

Given the strength of opposition to the merger, it is hard to see why the council rejected an alternative plan: to federate the two centres under linked management, as Wood-Allum himself recommended.

One reason is money. Leicestershire is coping with a Conservative-inspired budget that is lower than the government's "standard spending assessment". "In an ideal world, we'd have both centres doing their own thing," says Bob Pritchard. "But a huge slice has been cut from the education budget, and an even bigger one from the community education budget."

The Highfields row has raised questions about whether the county council is too distant to make choices on behalf of local people. Should white councillors representing rural areas decide what happens in the multiracial inner city? Should the county's director of education, with 400 schools in his patch, spend so much time on one community centre?

Perhaps Sir John Banham's Local Government Commission, on its trawl through England's councils, should ponder the Highfields saga before it decides what to recommend for Leicester and Leicestershire. (The city wants "unitary" status, which would mean taking over education from the county.)

"The challenge thrown up by this affair is how to involve local people in deciding what services are provided," says Dave Purdey, of the Leicester Racial Equality Council. "Here in Highfields, people are climbing over each other to get on to any available lifeboat. It's the politics of the powerless."

INFLUENCES

JOYCE GOULD
Former Labour Party director of organisation; new Labour peer

What books and authors have had the greatest influence on your political beliefs?
Jack London's *People of the Abyss* is still the most evocative description of the degrading influence of unemployment; Stafford Cripps' *Problems of a Socialist Government*, which contains a statement I have always believed to be true: "There is one fundamental principle in the democratic idea to which we must adhere. Before any great changes are brought about in the structure of the State we must obtain a mandate from the majority of the people."

Name one film, one book, one play and one song or piece of music that you would most like everyone to see, read or hear.
Film: *Cabaret*—to show the power of propaganda.
Book: Crosland's *Future of Socialism.*
Play: *Oh! What a Lovely War* by Joan Littlewood.
Song and music: Simply Red's "Turn It Up", and Dennis Brain playing Mozart's Horn Concerto.

In the early stages of your life, which figures stand out as an important influence on you?
Leading suffragette Leonora Cohen, and Robert Charles, a Trinidadian, both Leeds party activists who taught me to understand the iniquities of discrimination and that it is our responsibility to fight for equality for all.

What event during your lifetime has had the greatest effect on your political beliefs?
The use of weapons of mass destruction.

Which political figure, living or dead, do you most admire?
Michael Foot, for his humanity and integrity, and all those members who have shown their loyalty and commitment to the party without gain or favour.

If you could visit any time in history for 24 hours, which would you choose?
Any day between 1834 and 1848, to give the charismatic Feargus O'Connor some organisational advice on the People's Charter.

What do you consider the greatest threat at present to individual freedom and liberty?
The rebirth of fascism and the rise of fundamentalism and nationalism.

On important matters, whose opinions—other than your own—do you trust most?
Those of my close family and friends.

Who is the greatest prime minister we never had?
Nye Bevan, for his vision, oratory and internationalism, appreciating that the power, prestige and patronage of office and the imperatives of the time inevitably change the person.

If you could pass one law, what would it be?
As an idealist, I would strengthen the anti-discrimination laws to cover all aspects of a person's life, in education, at work, at home, and in our relations with each other.

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MPs say Paddy Ashdown is inconsistent, but he has one unswerving aim—to turn the third party into the first. Can he break out from protest politics, asks **Sarah Baxter**

Soldiering on

Paddy Ashdown is in high spirits as his party conference approaches. It is only right that he should be.

The Liberal Democrats have been nudging the Tories into third place now and then in the polls. His personal standing is higher with the public than John Major's or John Smith's. The Lib Dems have won two spectacular by-election victories and made huge inroads into the Tory vote in the south in the county council elections. They have a better base in the country than the Alliance had in its heyday. Membership is rising and the party is solvent. The European elections are on the horizon.

And yet . . . Ashdown has experienced the by-election buzzes and hopes of a third-party lift-off dozens of times before. It is part of the enduring pattern of life for veteran Liberals. The party enjoys just enough success to attract and retain members, but never enough to make the breakthrough that will take it out of protest politics.

"Not every vote we received at Christchurch and Newbury and in the county council elections was ours because of wild and energetic enthusiasm," Ashdown admits. "Much of it—some of it—much of it," he hesitates, "is based on protest. But that's not to be sneezed at! British politics has been run on the basis of protest for 50 years. You vote Labour because you don't like the Tories. You vote Tory because you don't like Labour." It is not for him to complain if the old duopoly works in the Lib Dems' favour for a change.

"The British electorate is test-buying our politics. They like what they see and we have gained at least some of their trust, even if it's only temporary. The job for us now is to hang on to that vote," he says.

Ashdown knows how to avoid the constant disappointment of third-party politics. The best ruse is to set himself limited targets. "Without wishing to sound pompous or self-satisfied"—for he is growing sensitive to this charge—"we are exactly where I wanted us to be at this stage of the game."

Immediately after the last general election, he wrote a confidential memo to his parliamentary colleagues. The Tories, he predicted, would be in disarray over Europe. Labour, would not have made many strides towards "modernisation". The Lib Dems would be reinforcing their position in the south and reaching 20 per cent in the polls (two points up on their general election figure). All this and more, Ashdown smiles, has come to pass.

So much so that the old Liberal dream of overtaking Labour has reasserted itself. "Of course, I want the third party to become the first party. What the bloody hell am I in politics for!"

"We have already overtaken Labour," he boasts. "We have replaced it in all the seats that matter, where the Tories need to be beaten. Just tell me when Surrey used to be part of our heartlands! You'd have to go back to the 1906 government to find it."

"I'm not pretending we can destroy the Labour Party. That's nonsense. We've had enough last rites read over us to know that parties don't vanish, but I want the Liberal Democrats to be *the* strong force for progressive politics in this country."

But the Lib Dems' conference policy document, *Facing up to the Future*, shows how close together in language and policy Labour and the Lib Dems are becoming (see "Spot the difference", page 16). Ashdown admits that "Gordon Brown is describing things that are not a million miles away from us," but he insists that only the Lib Dems have a coherent philosophy.

"Our huge advantage is to be standing on the ground that matters while others are struggling towards it. The Tories and Labour will cherry pick our ideas. That's not new. It happens all the time. The Labour Party is held back by historical baggage and the Conservative Party has been held back by Thatcherism and the history of the last 14 years."

Ashdown refuses point blank to define the Lib Dems' notion of empowering the individual in the community as a left-of-centre project. "Individualism and the role of the individual is not definable in left-right form. If anything, you'd say it was owned by the right, yet it is now progressive politicians who are talking about it."

His distaste is linked directly to his steadfast adherence to the politics of "equidistance". The idea that the Lib Dems might prop up the Tories for a fifth term in government is laughable, but Ashdown still clings to it. It sits uncomfortably with his notion of being honest with the public.

The Lib Dems are understandably fearful of alienating disaffected Tory voters. But sooner or later, this problem has to be confronted. Ashdown started down this road after the last election in his Chard speech, when he spoke in favour of building an anti-Tory opposition. He claims that it has had even more success than he dared hope, pointing to the "pluralist" politics that have developed in the hung councils of southern England. But he will not make the connection at national level.

Ashdown sees himself as a decisive person. "I've sat on the fence occasionally, when I couldn't make my mind up, but politics is about taking decisions."

Yet when Lib-Lab relations are under discussion, he retreats behind a cloud of empty rhetoric. "I don't know what is going to happen between now and the general election. We're in a period of profound change. We couldn't predict what was going to happen in the last election two days out."

All very true. But that, surely, was what put voters off. Would it not be better to build people's trust now in a prospective Lib-Lab government, so that the Tories cannot successfully sabre-rattle at the last minute again?

There is something in that argument, Ashdown concedes. "When we get nearer to the election, we will no doubt have to say what the circumstances are. But between now and then, my only interest is in the Liberal Democrats. We are an independent force in politics. We are separate. We are identifiable. We are strong."

He is neither in favour of pacts, nor unilateral stand-down agreements at local level. Constituency parties are sovereign, he says, but he is against diminishing the voters'

Select

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choice of candidate. "It's a curiously metropolitan and paternalistic view to suppose that people are too dim to make up their own minds. People in Christchurch and Newbury did not need to be told what to do."

Ashdown cites five main discernible differences with Labour. The Lib Dems are more internationalist; more enthusiastic about Europe; more anti-corporatist; more attracted to the free market; and more wedded to constitutional change. Labour has been moving in all these directions, says Ashdown, but, "Let's wait and see if they get there. My view is they can't, but it's their problem, not mine."

He would like to substitute the split between modernisers and conservatives for old left and right divisions. Modernisers and conservatives exist in both Labour and the Tory parties, he insists. Politics is no longer bipolar but three or four dimensional. This is the intellectual justification he gives for avoiding Lib-Lab co-operation. But Labour's willingness to have a referendum on electoral reform, the work of the Social Justice Commission, and the introduction of one member, one vote (if successful) have weakened this argument. For those with eyes to see, the two parties are natural allies.

"We are an independent force in politics. We are separate. We are strong."

Ashdown claims to be pleased with Labour's progress in a purely disinterested sense. "I hope that Labour goes one member, one vote. I want a modern Labour Party. Britain needs a modern Labour Party. I'm not saying this is right for the Liberal Democrats. The country also needs an in-touch Conservative Party."

The Plant commission on electoral reform, he says, is "a very good example of how Labour can travel a few steps, but not the whole distance". Of course, he welcomed its outcome: "Heaven rejoices in one sinner, and so on." But he is not going to hang out the bunting, even though Labour is more than halfway to meeting the key condition for Lib-Lab cooperation at the last election.

He still gives the impression of being marginally fonder of John Major than John Smith. Ashdown was charmed by Major when he came to power, and, to some extent, still is. "I thought he had a capacity for genuinely speaking for a much broader swathe of opinion than those who are committed to the Conservative Party. He is a very personable and charming man, very good in twos and threes. I thought he would introduce a more rational style of politics and, for a few months, during the Gulf war, he did. But, unfortunately, as his own position has deteriorated, largely through his own fault, he has denied his most saleable attribute. He has become partisan, as in the House of Commons at Question Time."

Indeed, Major spits venom at Ashdown. To great cheers from his colleagues, Major recently accused him of turning pomposity into an art form. Ashdown takes the personal attacks as a compliment. It is a source of pride to him that the Tories are now treating the Lib Dems as a serious threat to their position. He expects much worse to come. "The Tories are going to open a huge attack on us. They're going to try everything. Smear, innuendo, because they're scared to death of us."

And this is the party that Ashdown still pretends he can do business with. "Oh Labour's just the same," he airily says.

The charge of pomposity is that most often made against Ashdown. MPs are irritated like crazy when he takes the high moral ground, although the public seems to feel it makes him more of a person, and less of a despised politician. If only they knew the half of it, MPs mutter through gritted teeth.

Ashdown is hopelessly inconsistent, they argue. He has changed his mind over the desirability of the social chapter, the need for tax increases and the continued presence of British troops in Bosnia, they say. Ashdown has a politician's answer for all of these charges, which he naturally rebuts. But it infuriates the Tories and Labour that he can evade detailed scrutiny of his policies, and they can't.

It is easy for the Lib Dems to be more radical and experimental on paper than Labour. *Facing up to the Future* contains proposals for hypothecated taxes, for instance, which Labour has been flirting with but is a long way from endorsing. The Lib Dems' recent constitutional paper, *Here We Stand*, has also floated the controversial idea of putting non-politicians in the cabinet. Notoriously, the Lib Dems proposed VAT on fuel in a policy document on the environment not long ago. Governments that take those decisions have to live with the consequences.

Ashdown insists that if the Lib Dems are to consolidate their support and win voters' trust, they have to get their policies across, "the endemic problem for third parties". He spent six months from October to June disappearing from the Commons and spending time with Lib-Dem supporting families in such hidden corners of Britain as Moss Side, Toxteth, the Orkneys and the Irish borders.

He found on his travels that politicians were "dangerously out of touch and dangerously disrespected" by ordinary people. He fears that if the gulf between them continues to widen, Europe may become engulfed by fascism and racism. He is willing to admit that his party may have been ahead of the voters on Europe and that, although he remains a committed federalist: "Any politician who went through the Maastricht process and didn't feel their fingers slightly singed is a fool." This is not the time for politicians to take another great leap forward, he argues.

But, in other respects, he maintains that the Lib Dems are in tune with the times and the voters. It is just that they have yet to receive the good news.

Yet it is in the party's short-term interests for people to remain ignorant. Ashdown can play the game of equidistance as long as only the chattering classes know what is in those Lib Dem policy documents.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT PRESENTS

MOVING ON...

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Professor of Sociology, Open University

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2. Rethinking Social Institutions. Anne Showstack Sassoon, Dr Steve Iliffe. Wed 20 Oct.
3. The Politics of Military Intervention. Frank Blackaby, Michael Meacher, Labour MP, Kate Soper. Wed 27 Oct..
4. 'New Times' Revisited. Mike Rustin, Geoff Mulgan. Wed 3 Nov.
5. Employment, the Budget and the Future. Will Hutton, Economics Editor, The Guardian. William Keegan, Economics Editor, The Observer. Wed 10 Nov.
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NEW STATESMAN & SOCIETY

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Everyone knows that Labour and the Liberal Democrats disagree about proportional representation. But can you get a cigarette paper between the two opposition parties on any other substantive policy issue? Find out by doing this special *NSS* quiz

Spot the difference

1. Who told a Charter 88 audience earlier this year:
"I want to see a fundamental shift in the balance of power between the citizen and the state—a shift away from an overpowering state to a citizen's democracy where people have rights and powers and where they are served by accountable and responsive government."
a) John Smith b) Paddy Ashdown?

2. Who told a Charter 88 audience earlier this year:
"The fundamental weakness of the British constitution lies in the structure and nature of power. The distribution of power between individual and state, parliament and government, centre and locality, are dangerously out of balance for an effective modern democracy."
a) John Smith b) Paddy Ashdown?

3. Which party promised in a January 1992 policy document:
● "Home rule for Scotland and Wales, with the creation of an elected Scottish Parliament and Welsh Senedd.
● Measures to strengthen and democratise local government . . . and steps towards regional government in England.
● A Freedom of Information Act, guaranteeing public rights of access to information and placing the responsibility on government and other authorities to justify secrecy.
● The incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law . . ."
a) Labour b) The Liberal Democrats?

4. Who said earlier this year:
"I believe we need a new tier of government for Scotland and Wales and for the regions of England. Government decentralised from Whitehall and close enough to the people for them to take effective control over areas of policy like health, education, employment, transport, planning and industrial development . . . The quickest and simplest way of achieving democratic and legal recognition of a substantial package of human rights would be by incorporating into British law the European Convention on Human Rights . . . The citizens of this country need a Freedom of Information Act because they have a right to know the facts."
a) John Smith b) Paddy Ashdown?

5. Which party passed a policy document containing the following passage at its 1992 annual conference:
"The [European] Community must also do much more to overcome its democratic deficit. Too many of the Community's institutions are insufficiently accountable and distant from the electorates of Europe which they are meant to serve. The principle of subsidiarity—which calls for decision-making in the Community to be as decentralised as possible—must be given real force. We must argue for a more open and effective Council of Ministers, a more accountable Commission and a strengthened European Parliament."
a) Labour b) The Liberal Democrats?

6. Which party recently produced a policy document containing the following passage on Europe:
"No longer must the reform and development of the Community be a matter for ministers and bureaucrats—it must be one for people. This means:
● More democracy in Europe, including greater powers for the European Parliament . . . a Commission which is more accountable to parliament . . . and better national scrutiny of national ministers' actions in the Community.
● A Community which is relevant to ordinary people . . . Our vision of Europe is of a Community which is decentralised, pluralist and diverse."
a) Labour b) The Liberal Democrats?

7. Which party's conference will this year debate a policy document containing the following passage on the economy:
"Investment levels remain comparatively low by international standards; ten out of the last 13 years have seen investment inadequate even to replace capital scrapping in the manufacturing sector . . . We reject the laissez-faire approach: government is needed not only to ensure competition but also to guarantee investment in human (and physical) capital and environmental sustainability . . . Recent government policy has concentrated on constraining public expenditure and privatising public assets to the detriment of the investment needed to boost international competitiveness and provide essential infrastructure. And this has resulted in the wasting of the economic and personal potential of those trapped in unemployment and poverty . . . This must end."
a) Labour b) The Liberal Democrats?

8. Which party's conference will this year debate a policy document containing the following passage on the economy:
"[The] critical Tory failure during 14 North Sea oil years has been a failure to invest in Britain's future . . . [This] failure derives from a wrong ideology—the crude dogma of free market economics—which denies the need for action by the community to advance individual economic potential and assumes the presence of individual opportunity only when there is absence of government.
Britain has:
● failed to generate sufficient investment in our industrial base;
● failed to generate sufficient investment in skills;
● failed to generate sufficient investment in the social and economic fabric of our country."
a) Labour b) The Liberal Democrats?

9. Which party has just produced a policy document that says the following about tax policy:
"Taxation is needed to raise necessary revenue and as an instrument of economic management. But the underlying purpose of taxation should be to provide opportunity, whether through investment in universal services such as health or through specific targeted assistance in cases of need such as disability benefits."
a) Labour b) The Liberal Democrats?

10. Which economics spokesperson said the following last month:
"Not only do we not tax for its own sake, we only tax if it increases the opportunities for individuals or for the community as a whole. On spending, we recognise that public services exist for one purpose—to enhance people's opportunities and prosperity."
a) Gordon Brown b) Alan Beith?

11. Which party's conference will this year debate a policy document containing the following passage on taxation:
"Gross inequalities of income, wealth and power are not only morally objectionable and destructive of a sense of community. They also generate a vicious spiral of multiple deprivation in which inequality in one area feeds on and reinforces inequality in others, creating insuperable barriers to the equality of opportunity and choice we seek."
a) Labour b) The Liberal Democrats?

12. Who said late last year:
"To those with eyes to see, it must be abundantly clear that Britain is not a nation at ease with itself. Deepening poverty, growing homelessness and ever-increasing unemployment are the depressing realities of life today. A radical and comprehensive approach is needed if we are to provide real opportunities for each and social justice for all."
a) John Smith b) Paddy Ashdown?

Answers: 1. a; 2. b; 3. b; 4. a; 5. a; 6. b; 7. b; 8. a; 9. b; 10. a; 11. b; 12. a. Score one point for each correct answer. If you have more than six points and you are not John Smith, Paddy Ashdown or an employee of Conservative Central Office, you must be a researcher for the BBC in Westminster.

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Raymond Plant led Labour's inquiry into electoral reform. Initially, he thought reform was a bad idea. Here he reveals why he changed his mind

Why changing the system gets my vote

When I was appointed to chair Labour's inquiry into electoral reform in 1990, I was very sceptical about the whole business of constitutional and electoral reform. I thought the preoccupation by many on the left with the procedures of politics betrayed a loss of confidence in the values of democratic socialism.

I felt the movement for constitutional and electoral reform was replacing a concern for the goals of the Labour Party, such as creating a more just and more equal society. For example, the strengthening of civil and political rights, however desirable, was likely to be a formal exercise in the context of large and increasing social inequalities.

My political activities in the eighties were directed towards trying to help with the defence and rethinking of democratic socialist goals. I founded (with others) the Socialist Philosophy Group, and wrote Fabian pamphlets on equality and economic and social rights, as well as a book attacking economic liberalism from a democratic socialist perspective.

I felt—and indeed still do feel—confident about the ends, goals, purposes and values of democratic socialism, and did not want to get diverted into thinking about political procedures. Constitutional reform for a party of the left could not be an end in itself.

"Constitutional reform can be seen to play a central role in creating a new legitimacy for political processes"

I changed my mind about constitutional and electoral reform for interconnected reasons. These have little to do with Labour's prospects under first past the post. I came to see a close link between Labour's achievement of its goals and constitutional and electoral reform.

First, and perhaps most fundamentally, the party is committed to using political power to change, constrain and intervene in market processes in pursuit of social justice and greater fairness. Thus it has to rely very heavily on the perceived legitimacy of a political, as opposed to purely market, allocation of resources.

It does seem to me that there has been a very considerable loss of a sense of legitimacy of political processes and institutions. Insofar as Labour has to rely on these to implement its values, it must be concerned about the quality of the institutions whose power it has to use. Hence constitutional reform can be seen as playing a central role in creating a new legitimacy for political processes, for rehabilitating the political forum after 15 years of the untrammelled market.

Of course this does not necessarily imply reform of the voting system. There are many convinced constitutional reformers—and John Smith is one—who do not accept the case for electoral reform of the House of Commons. But in my mind, the case is made by linking this commitment to constitutional reform to two other arguments.

The Labour government of 1945 was able to reshape British society in ways that have stood the test of time, until relatively recently, because the very high degree of social solidarity and consensus at the end of the war provided a kind of communal moral resource for the party to draw on. Those conditions have evaporated. We now live in a much more pluralistic, fragmented society.

Instead of a future Labour government pursuing policies that draw on and reflect a pre-existing sense of community, it will, in many respects, have to try to create a sense of community and common purpose in society. It is difficult to see how this could be achieved through possibly a small parliamentary majority based on a minority of the popular vote.

Inasmuch as Labour is using the language of community and the common good as a way of securing legitimacy for its policies, there is at least a case for saying this should be accompanied by a commitment to an electoral system that would mean it would have to secure wider consent in parliament for its policies. It was a great insight of Rosa Luxemburg that political action has to reflect the political values it serves. A more communitarian politics might be thought to require a less exclusivist electoral system as a way of securing legitimacy for political action in the name of community.

This point relates to the geographical fragmentation of British politics. There are major party-political cleavages between city and suburb, town and country. First past the post has exacerbated these problems. A more community-based approach to politics would be inclined to look for an electoral system (as well as policies) that would enable political views supported by substantial numbers of people—for example, Labour in south east England—to be represented in parliament.

The final reason I have accepted the case for electoral reform was the result of reflection on the implications for the House of Commons of Labour's proposals for devolution and an elected second chamber. Assuming these bodies would be elected by a form of PR as our working party has recommended, and assuming these bodies would have the powers allocated to them under Labour's proposals, then I think it is inconceivable that a government elected by first past the post could sustain legitimacy in the country at large in what would be a more pluralistic political system embodying checks and balances and a new degree of pluralism, both within and between institutions.

I still believe in greater equality and social justice. But if political action and political intervention to achieve these ends are to be seen as fair and just in a more pluralistic political system, then I think there is a strong case for such action to be underpinned by an electoral system that supports those values more than does first past the post.

It is often argued that a reformed electoral system would produce weak government. It is important not to confuse strength with effectiveness. We had, until Margaret Thatcher's demise, a period of strong government, but whether it has been effective in meeting Britain's long-term needs is another question. A government that was required to listen more by the need to mobilise greater consent in parliament—rather than, as Mr Major is doing, using the rhetoric of listening while pursuing wildly unpopular policies—is likely to be morally stronger and politically more effective.

This would be particularly the case for a government wedded to the ideas and values of community. Of course there is no perfect system and all these issues are matters of judgment, but I believe the time has come for Labour to make sure its views on the procedures of politics are consistent with its political values.

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How can a one-time fascist aspire to receive the Nobel Peace Prize? Easy, says **Andrew Jennings**, if you happen to be Juan Samaranch, Lord of the Olympic Rings

Eyes on the Prize

What a day of triumph for an old career fascist. How satisfying to have Britain's Prime Minister, a member of the British royal family and assorted international politicians, all grovelling before you.

Doesn't that right arm feel the old imperative coming on? Isn't it time to snap it upwards, the way you always did on high state occasions? Well, you have your own state now and they all have to pay homage. The TV cameras are running, hundreds of journalists are poised. The whole world is watching, waiting to hear just one word—from you, Juan Antonio Samaranch, president of the International Olympic Committee.

This is the story of a man with a repellent political record who has been allowed to exploit and nearly destroy one of the world's greatest idealistic institutions. He could not have done it without the connivance of the media, especially in Britain.

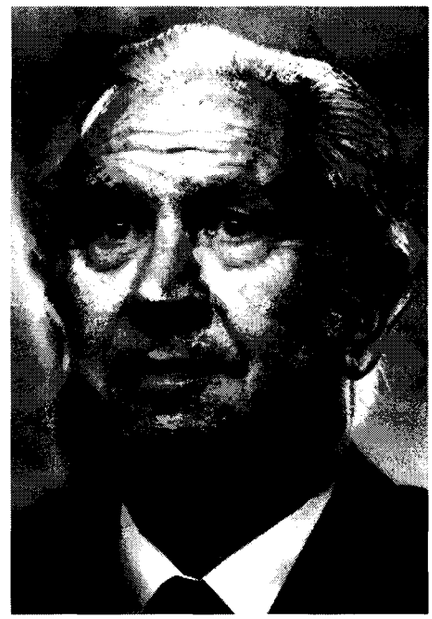
Next Thursday, John Major will be in Monte Carlo supporting Manchester's doomed bid to stage the Olympics of 2000. He may be mystified by the crushing defeat. He will be surrounded by a cabal who could have warned him off—the specialists in Olympic politics from our sports pages.

The word they anxiously await will not be "Manchester". The reasons the city will lose include the lack of premium boutiques for wives of the 90-odd IOC members, who own the games and choose the venue, and the shortage of five-star hotels for them to reside in. So the choice can only be Sydney or Beijing. Australians are sports-mad and would stage a great Olympics. China is a brutal dictatorship with an appalling gulag. So Sydney must win. Wrong.

The choice for the venue of the Millenium Games has nothing to do with sport or Olympic idealism. It will be determined by Samaranch's vain personal agenda. And what Samaranch wants, he usually gets.

The old fascist has two intractable problems: his political past and the debased reputation of his IOC. To understand why he manipulates the Olympic movement for his own benefit, you must appreciate what he seeks to obliterate. Samaranch, now in his seventies, deserted from the army of the Spanish Republic during the civil war and hid in Barcelona until Franco had won. He spent the next 35 years climbing the ladder of fascist politics, ending up as head of Franco's rubber stamp Catalan "parliament".

Ten years after the allies discovered Auschwitz, he volunteered for the elite fascist Falange, wore its uniform and gave the fascist salute. This he did until Franco died in 1975, long after more thoughtful Franquistas were engaging in clandestine negotiations to restore democracy. Tarred by Francoism,



Sportsphoto

Samaranch has two intractable problems: his political past and the debased reputation of his IOC

Samaranch departed into exile when democracy returned to Spain. The Olympic movement offered a chance to rebuild a political career cut down in its prime.

Last year, we published our book detailing his commitment to the dictator's regime and released our *World in Action* documentary, shown in more than 25 countries. With its archive footage of Samaranch dressed in his fascist finery and abasing himself before Franco, his past has come back to haunt him. He desperately seeks a way to erase those embarrassing images.

Samaranch has similar problems with his IOC. Since the huge profits of the Los Angeles Games in 1984, cities have competed to host the event and Olympic morality has taken a dive. During bidding for the Winter Games, Anchorage in Alaska claimed an IOC member demanded money in return for his and other IOC members' votes, and a Swedish hostess alleged she was pressured to have sex with another member. Amsterdam reported further shakedown attempts and, in Toronto, an IOC member tried to extract a free scholarship for his child. But nobody complains in public about the IOC. It would destroy any hope of winning the Olympics.

Some IOC members practised the travel racket. Bidding cities sent them first-class tickets and invitations to inspect their facilities. Members cashed in their tickets and stayed at home—or obtained cheaper deals through travel agents.

Samaranch tolerated this freeloading—and the racketeering allegations—until Barcelona had secured its games. Then the IOC ruled that tickets must be non-refundable and that gifts to members should not exceed US$200. Under more pressure last summer after our disclosures, they abolished presents.

Can anyone remember the opening speeches at the Barcelona Games? It's unlikely—they weren't reported by our Olympic specialists. The comments of the city's socialist mayor, Pascal Maragall, stunned Samaranch and left Catalonia overjoyed.

Eschewing the usual clichés, Maragall addressed his audience in the Monjuich Olympic stadium. "Fifty-six years ago, the People's Olympiad should have taken place here. The name of the President of the People's Olympiad is engraved on the old marathon door. He was called Luis Companys and he was president of the Catalan government."

Companys was the last elected leader of autonomous Catalonia before democracy was crushed by Franco. He fled to France but was returned by the Gestapo to face a summary military trial. Every Catalan knows the story of Luis Companys' execution. His last request was to be shot barefoot, so his feet could feel the precious soil of Catalonia in his final moments. As the firing squad took aim he shouted, "Long live free Catalonia!"

The implications of Maragall's speech screamed out to all but the flannelled fools in the press box. Samaranch, standing next to Maragall on the podium, was a beneficiary of the volley that cut Companys down.

Had Maragall's speech been widely reported it would have caused another problem for those clever image massagers at the Grey public relations company in New York. They were hired by Samaranch in 1991; their slogan is: "The people to get you into a winning position." But what did Samaranch want to win? Six months research with two Norwegian journalists produced the proof that Samaranch is lobbying for the Nobel Peace Prize. You almost have to admire his impertinence.

But he needs a dramatic gesture to catch the attention of the Peace Prize committee. The only big initiative left is the choice of the venue of 2000. Steering the games to China will allow Samaranch to claim the IOC was instrumental in bringing China back into the world mainstream. As Grey PR rashly admitted to my Norwegian colleagues, the plan then is to hold a successful Winter Games in Lillehammer, a hyped-up Olympic Centenary Congress in Paris in June next year and then lift the Prize in December. This has not been published in the British press.

Three British papers employ Olympic "experts". The best coverage is in the *Telegraph*. Their Olympic correspondent, Iain Macleod, defers to Samaranch, but has reported allega-

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tions of lavish gifts to IOC members from Beijing and writes of the moral bankruptcy of the IOC. His colleague Peter Hildreth assiduously tracks the rampant doping in sport, and columnist Robert Hardman frequently mentions Samaranch's fascist past.

If only this were the case in the supposedly liberal press. At the end of the Barcelona Games the *Guardian's* Olympic specialist John Rodda was seduced by Grey's lobbying. He wrote: "Many must have wondered amid all the dazzle and noise of the finale what sort of recognition might be accorded the man who had presided over the largest gathering of nations in Olympic history . . . There cannot be much dispute that he should be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize."

But the gold medallist in the Sucking Up To An Old Fascist final is David Miller of the *Times*. Miller has volunteered himself as Samaranch's mouthpiece. Last year, he published his authorised biography of Samaranch, immediately made available at a 35 per cent discount to the Olympic movement.

Samaranch's fascist history is sufficiently documented to fill a whole volume. Miller condensed it into one sentence: "He has, by the catholicity of his public and private behaviour, been able to rise above any criticism of his involvement in administration during Franco's time."

Miller's hagiography served one useful purpose. Its devastating final sentence first alerted us to the Peace Prize campaign. It reads: "The IOC, under the guiding force of Samaranch, is the most universal social instrument of peace in our time."

Miller has backed Manchester's bid. But in June he drip-fed from Wapping: "It is suspected that Samaranch considers the Olympic Games, a weapon of peace, could serve to bring together China and its ideological opponents in the same way that the Seoul Games assisted South Korea."

These references to South Korea are part of Samaranch's habit of rewriting history. Just as he continues to claim that Franco did a good job for Spain, he also claims the IOC was instrumental in ending apartheid and restoring democracy to Korea. The ludicrous claim now being racked up by Samaranch is that, by taking a corrupt sports event to Beijing, it can bring peace and justice to China.

Beijing will win because that is what the IOC wants. The latest evidence comes direct from an IOC advertising supplement in *Time* paid for by the IOC and written by Miller. No doubt overseen by the image massagers at Grey, it appears to be softening up the world for Beijing.

One page is headed "Wherever Next"and carries 110 words devoted to the Beijing bid. The key section reads, "On sporting grounds alone the IOC would be reluctant to deny Beijing. It also seems unfair that the actions of a few elderly politicans should prevent China's youth from playing host. Samaranch is thought to be among those who feel that, despite the differences between the two countries, the Olympic movement could do for China what it did for South Korea."

The text goes on: "Also strongly contending are Sydney, with excellent facilities and long sporting traditions, and Manchester and Istanbul, offering convincing credentials." And that's it. The other bidders are dismissed in one short sentence.

Rather than pander to the IOC, Manchester should have returned to a cheap and simple Olympic Games

This is the latest clue. The earliest came in June 1991 when Samaranch awarded the Olympic Order to Xitong Chen, Mayor of Beijing, describing him as: "An ardent defender of sport for youth." Two years previously, the same gentleman had signed the order turning Beijing into a military camp and leading to the massacres. The Order was also given to Baifa Zhang, Beijing's deputy Mayor, renowned for his comment: "The so-called Tiananmen Square incident is something of the past and the Chinese people have almost forgotten about it."

Samaranch and his IOC have been lauded throughout China and showered with gifts. China has provided unlimited funds to win the Olympics, casually tossed in US$1 million to fund the new Olympic Museum, and called in political favours worldwide. Throw in the American TV networks' preference for the Great Wall as a backdrop to the games, and the new markets China can offer Olympic sponsors, and 23 September becomes a day when Manchester should draw the curtains.

The good news, if you believe the IOC, is that doping is in decline. They say so all the time, but it's a lie.

The dope cops caught just five competitors in Barcelona, none of them big stars, and so the bad headlines were few. Samaranch claimed, "I do sincerely believe we are winning the battle against doping." The truth came in December last year, in a news item that sports hacks buried fast. Indeed the IOC has done a pretty good damage limitation job itself. Prince de Merode, chair of the IOC medical commission, disclosed in a Belgian sports magazine that post-Barcelona examination of the 2,000 urine samples revealed a staggering one in ten of the competitors was a serious steroids abuser. That's nearly a thousand dopers. Can we have their names? No—apparently the lists were destroyed.

If your sports pages didn't tell you about the Barcelona 100, then they probably didn't bother you with a similar story from Seoul. Profiles of samples from 1,100 male competitors revealed irrefutable evidence that 50 of them were steroid abusers. Again, their names were kept secret.

Doping has been the commercial salvation of the Olympics. It fuels the world records that bring in the TV viewers who bring in the sponsors. The truth was spelled out recently by that great Tour de France veteran, Greg Lamond: "In every sport where a lot of money is involved, drugs are taken."

Manchester might have won the Olympics of 2000. Its mistake was to ape other bids, fall in line with what the IOC dictated and, worst of all, forget what the games are supposed to be about. The winning strategy would have been simple. Rather than pander to the IOC, Manchester should have taken them on. The bid team could have produced a plan that returned to a cheap and simple Olympic Games, required IOC members to give up their five-star hotels and chauffeur-driven limousines and bed down in the athletes village and share their buses. They could have returned to Olympic idealism and banned professionals like the arrogant US basketball Dream Team, who spurned the athletes' village for luxury hotels. A promise of lie-detectors installed at the airport could deter the heavy dopers.

All this would have shocked Samaranch's coterie, but caught the enthusiasm of the world. A return to Olympic idealism would have been unbeatable. Through gritted teeth, the IOC would have had to vote for Manchester. Giving the games to more lavish bidders would have finished what little reputation they have left.

It makes my toes curl when I see anybody who knows of the horrors that fascism has wreaked on this century shake Samaranch's hand. Next Thursday Major and his retinue will abase themelves before the last relic of the era of the fascist dictator. So will the British press.

The updated paperback of "The Lords of the Rings", by Andrew Jennings and Vyv Simson, is from Simon & Schuster at £4.99. Their "World In Action", based on the book, won the gold medal for best international documentary at the New York TV Festival

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Peter Schrank

Yasser Arafat left the Arab states in the cold in his deal with Israel, reports **George Joffé**. This has bred resentments, but sets them free to act on their own

The backroom boys

Now that the first deal is signed and sealed, Israel and the PLO will have to begin the much more difficult task of trying to make it work. And, in attempting to do that, both of them are going to become increasingly concerned about the reactions of other countries in the Middle East to what they have agreed to do.

For Israel, perhaps, the issue is a little less acute, for it has formal diplomatic relationships with only one Middle Eastern state—Egypt—although, of course, one major purpose of this new peace process for Jerusalem is to transform the picture by ensuring that Israel acquires normal diplomatic links with all the others.

For the Palestinians, however, Middle Eastern reactions are crucial; they still face five years of difficult negotiations before a final settlement is reached (although the Arab states will have signed their agreements with Israel by then) and, without Arab and Muslim support, the path could be very rocky indeed.

It is already clear that Arab reaction to the PLO-Israel peace agreement is not one of unmitigated joy. There are some, it is true, who have shown no reservations about welcoming the deal—mainly those least affected by its implications, except, of course, Egypt. Egypt, after all, signed its own peace treaty with Israel 13 years ago, and has been pushing hard for the Palestinians to do the same.

No doubt, Cairo expects it will have a major role in working out the details of the deal, given its access to Jerusalem, just as it was instrumental in ensuring that the signing ceremony in Washington on 13 September was well-attended. That would at least assuage the Egyptian sense of having been marginalised up to now, because Egypt's peace treaty with Israel made it very difficult to pressure the Israeli government.

The Mubarak regime is also keen to demonstrate to the US that it will remain a vital partner in ensuring the peace process continues on a successful course, for there have been anxieties in Cairo that the Clinton administration was losing interest and patience as a result of Egypt's mounting difficulties and the growing threat of Islamic fundamentalism. There is, after all, still US$2.3 billion a year at stake in American aid.

Others, too, have had few reservations. Morocco, for example—visited by Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres on their way back from Washington this week and the first state visited by PLO leader Yasser Arafat after the news of the secret peace agreement broke—has been quietly supportive, as befits a state whose ruler has long believed that Israel and the Palestinians should come to terms and who has worked for that end. Morocco was the only Arab state after Egypt to welcome an Israeli premier, when Peres visited King Hassan in July 1986.

The Gulf states have also made their support clear in a statement by the Gulf Cooperation Council on 6 September that anticipated progress towards Middle Eastern peace as a result of the PLO-Israel agreement. Egyptian officials claimed that this was important, for it meant there was now a majority within the Arab League in support of the deal—although the Arab League has been virtually moribund since the war against Iraq in 1991.

In fact, there never was any doubt that the Gulf states, given their current estrangement from the PLO and anxiety for close relations with the west, would have supported any deal that lessened regional tensions, particularly with Israel. Kuwait has been at the forefront of moves to end the Arab boycott against Israel, and Gulf anger with the PLO has meant that the organisation's vital funding of US$300 million a year has been cut by half since 1991—a powerful factor in pushing Arafat towards accepting the minimal concessions Israel made in formulating the Declaration of Principles signed in Washington.

Gulf determination over the issue was made brutally clear to the Palestinian negotiator Faisal Husseini in late July, when he pleaded with leading Saudi officials for aid to prevent starvation breaking out in the West Bank and Gaza and was told, allegedly by Prince Bandar, "Sign!" In other words, the funds would flow only when the Palestinian negotiators in the now-bypassed Washington talks signed up for an autonomy plan that they had already rejected as unacceptable.

It is notable, however, that the Gulf declaration in support of the Arafat-Peres deal is very low key. In part, of course, this reflects the continuing resentments within the Gulf over the PLO's alleged support for Saddam Hussein after the invasion of Kuwait in 1991, which resulted in the expulsion of more than 300,000 Palestinians in 1991 and 1992. Saudi media sources, for instance, have been instructed to highlight opposition to the deal in what appears to be an attempt to undermine it.

It also reflects, however, a more general Arab concern that Arafat has engaged in secret negotiations with Israel to which no Arab state was party. In so far as there is still a diplomatic fiction in Arab politics that the Palestinian issue is a common Arab concern, there is also an expectation on the part of Arab governments that consultation should precede any major initiative. That this did not happen has bred resentment among some governments.

King Hussein of Jordan made this plain in his own inimitable way during a press conference he held in Amman after receiving details of the PLO-Israel agreement—three days after it had originally been announced. Nor is this just a question of sour grapes, for the king also made it clear that, while he fully supported the Palestinian initiative, he now felt free for Jordan to go its own way in negotiating with Israel. In other words, the Jordan "umbrella" that has acted as a protective shield for the Palestinians during the Washington peace negotiations is now to be removed, and in future the Palestinians will be on their own.

In fact, matters will not be so clear-cut. Israeli leaders still insist there will not be an independent Palestinian state, and that con-

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federation with Jordan is their preferred option at the end of the five-year transitional period. The future elected Palestinian autonomy council, to be based in Bethlehem, also has to consider very carefully how it is going to organise economic relations with its neighbours. Although the Declaration of Principles has two annexes that detail areas of economic cooperation with Israel, and a recent Harvard study concludes that economic links with Israel are vital for future survival, its authors conclude that similar economic links with Jordan will be essential. A kind of free trade area with open borders seems to be envisaged, and that will mean King Hussein's own negotiators will have to take a continued interest in what happens to the Palestinians.

Indeed, given the Hashemite monarchy's conviction of its role as the focus of Arab aspirations, and its revanchist desire to reverse the 1967 annexation of the West Bank (despite the king's renunciation of any such ambitions in 1988)—quite apart from the fact that 70 per cent of Jordan's population was originally Palestinian, with more than 1.1 million of them refugees—this will accord with the basic principles of Jordanian policy. It will also revive the Jordanian government's interest in political links.

Arafat, however, will receive little sympathy if things go wrong, not just from Jordan, but also from Syria. Indeed, President Assad's response to the agreement and to Arafat's personal request for support has been extremely cautious, not least because of personal pique at not having been privy to what was going on. There is also an anxiety in Damascus that separate deals between the PLO and Israel could mean that the Palestinian movements inside the occupied territories, at least, will become prisoners of Israeli policy imperatives and will thus weaken Syria's strategic position in the region as a whole. Syria has always seen the peace process as one in which any success for the Palestinians could be used as a lever for ensuring Israeli recognition of Syria's own strategic importance and of the justice of Syrian demands for the return of the Golan Heights.

If, now, Israeli-Palestinian peace is achieved without Syrian participation, what interest would there be for Israel in coming to an accommodation with Syria? Or, rather, would Syria not then be arguing from a position of weakness in attempting to extract the Golan Heights from Israeli control? Assad has always insisted that all of the Heights must be returned, something Israel is not at present prepared to countenance. How much more difficult will his position be if, now, the Syrian leader has lost his Palestinian lever?

Syria is, however, crucial to the PLO in several respects. The opposition to Arafat inside the organisation—from George Habbash's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Nayef Hawatmeh's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Ahmad Jibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command—has always depended heavily on Syrian support. Furthermore, there are another ten rejectionist groups, both within and outside the PLO, based in Damascus and Beirut, where they quietly enjoy Syrian tolerance. Assad can, if he wants, unleash this opposition, and will undoubtedly do so if Arafat is seen to falter in his control of the PLO-Israel deal. He did it, after all, in late 1983, when Syria supported the Abu Musa/Abu Saleh rebellion against the PLO leadership in Lebanon.

Syria also has 415,000 Palestinian refugees on its territory and these also represent a potential pressure on the PLO leadership. But the most important card that Assad possesses—and one that Israel also has to respect—is his control of Lebanon, with its 350,000 Palestinian refugees and the Iranian-influenced Shi'a movement, Hezbollah, which continues to demonstrate its antagonism towards Israel. This means that the Syrian leader can always make his displeasure with either the progress of the peace process, or with Arafat's leadership of the PLO, clear by using Lebanon as his arena of protest.

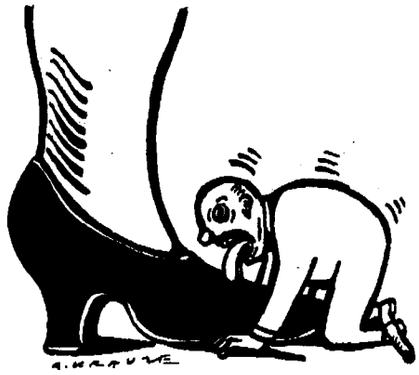
The Lebanese government, incidentally, is loudly proclaiming its own resentment at recent events; it wants all Palestinian refugees to return—something not provided for in the agreement—and Israel to leave the "security zone" in south Lebanon, which Jerusalem will only do in its own good time. The degree to which Syria helps or hinders the latest PLO initiative, however, largely depends on the speed with which Israel compromises over the Golan Heights.

There is another danger, too. Syria has some control over Hezbollah—as the Israeli government implicitly recognised after its pointless bombardment of southern Lebanon in July. But the other important influence there is Iran, and Iran has been decidedly ambiguous over the peace process initiated by Arafat. It has, of course, publicly condemned the process, but in muted tones. This reflects Iranian concerns over American hostility and the continuing struggle in Tehran between the pragmatists around President Rafsanjani and the extremists who still bear the banner of Khomeinism.

Rafsanjani knows that unless he condemns the initiative his radical opponents will pillory him. Yet if his criticism is too extreme, all hopes of a rapprochement with the west, particularly the US—crucial to the Iranian economy if it wishes to escape from its present crisis—will vanish for many years. So Iranian criticism will probably remain muted and will not encourage Hezbollah protest.

In general, then, governments in the Middle East are cautious about the prospects of general peace in the region and an equitable solution to the Palestinian problem. The PLO, having committed the egregious error of not consulting its Arab partners (although it is difficult to see how a deal could been reached if it had), may now be left to its own devices, even if the deal fails. Arab states, however, will certainly profit from the opportunities created by the PLO initiative by signing their own deals with Israel as soon as possible.

There is also no doubt that economic activity in the Middle East will boom in the wake of such agreements and Israeli investors, acting on their own behalf or for Europeans and Americans, are already seeking out likely business opportunities. Peace for the states of the Middle East, in short, is perhaps the most likely outcome of Arafat's audacious initiative, even if the Palestinians are left only with self-rule in Gaza and Jericho rather than with an independent state.



Memoirs of a Nobody

I wanted the public to see what it was like being one of Margaret's ministers. It was a very exciting time to be around.—Kenneth Baker

I licked the hand that fed me
With the lather on my tongues.
I followed her. She led me
Up the greasy ladder's rungs.

I licked the hand that bade me
With a monumental slurp.
They betrayed her, they betrayed me.
What a silly little twerp.

Yes, I licked my lips and lavished
Every loving epithet
On my leader—oh she ravished
And she found me soaking wet.

I licked her hand (What? *Trivia*?
This is history laid bare!)
Is it oil or is it Nivea
Which glisters in my hair?

I licked her fingers lightly,
My saliva running free,
And it didn't seem unsightly
To a loyalist. Like me.

How I licked her peccadilloes
With the syrup of my kiss!
And she plumped me up like pillows.
It was heaven. It was bliss.

I licked my lady leader
Till I'd coated her in creams,
And I'm sure she will concede her
Approbation for my schemes.

I licked her like a lolly
On a finely polished stick.
When together, were we jolly?
We were frankly very thick.

Oh I licked her in elation
Through my brilliant career.
I'm devoted to the nation.
Life of service. Is that clear?

Bill Greenwell

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Labour's "modernisers" are neglecting their core voters and going the wrong way to attract new ones, says **Peter Hain**

Mods and mockers

It's been a neat wheeze for the self-styled "modernisers" in the Labour Party to contrast themselves with "traditionalists". Who doesn't want to be "modern"? But its absurdity was underlined when David Blunkett and Bryan Gould were pejoratively labelled "traditionalists" in moderniser-spun news reports last week. In fact, both are long-standing campaigners for radical change in the party. Their crime is to disagree with the "moderniser" strategy and its vacuous economic policy.

For the "modernisers" have had a very specific project in mind. As Professor David Marquand, a Labour defector to the SDP and now a Liberal, observed approvingly: "The Labour Party of the 1990s has become the social-democratic party which Hugo Gaitskell tried and failed to create in the 1960s."

Within hours of Labour's 1992 election defeat—and almost as if having anticipated it—the "modernisers" insisted that Labour had to change even more rapidly and fundamentally than since 1983. The trade unions should be held at arm's length, constitutionally emasculated and their influence replaced by one-member-one-vote decision-making. What was left of the party's commitment to public ownership should be deleted along with Clause 4 and universal welfare provision.

For them, party campaigning is something focused on the national media, rather than a process of engaging with local citizens through the activity of party members and supporters, whom they consign to an essentially passive role.

Although pestered by phone or mailshot for donations, consulted in ballots and encouraged to turn out loyally at election time, members are denied collective power. Policy, modernisers have argued, should be determined by membership referendums: the indirect democracy of centralised balloting on questions set by the leadership should replace the direct democracy of activist participation. Political education is reduced to little more than the regurgitation of glossy frontbench handouts or the organising of platforms for rising stars.

This presupposes a model of change that is promoted through television, rather than through activity by socialists in what Gramsci called "civil society"—the everyday life of relationships, of community groups and networks, from parents of schoolchildren to local environmental campaigns and pensioners' clubs. The moderniser media model in practice, if not by design, effectively distances Labour politicians from grass-roots activity. This is fatal for socialists operating in a hostile culture driven by capitalist ethics.

The modernisers' strategy didn't work in the 1987 and 1992 elections. And, despite a government that is even more unpopular than Thatcher at her lowest, the party is doing no better now.

This is because the electorate doesn't know what Labour stands for anymore. People know what Labour is against, but not what it's for. They know that unilateralism, public ownership and support for strikes have been ditched. They hear that Labour is no longer the party of collectivism. But beyond this, they sense that the glitz, the televisual smile and the soundbite conceal a vacuum.

With party spokespersons dodging questions about Labour's alternatives, people increasingly become susceptible to the Tory message that Labour will say anything or do anything to get power, and cannot therefore be trusted.

However, this is not an argument for setting in concrete, three years before the next election, marginal tax rates, spending commitments and finer policy detail.

The modernisers believe that Labour can succeed only if it gives the least offence to the most people

I agree with the leadership's strategy of playing it long; Labour peaked too early last time round. The problem is that the modernising agenda is one of ideological sanitisation, driven by the belief that Labour can succeed only if it gives the least offence to the most people, rather than promoting genuine ideological differentiation from the Tories.

But to win, a party must first motivate its members, its potential recruits and its core voters. Although not a sufficient condition for victory, it is an essential pre-condition for it.

By such a test, the modernisers are failing badly. The steady demoralisation of the party has accelerated with every modernising lurch and is now almost unstoppable. Membership has plummeted and is ageing alarmingly. Few young people are being recruited. Activism has declined sharply. The party is not motivating its core voters, who appear increasingly to be staying at home on polling day.

As Patrick Seyd and Paul Whitely confirmed in *Labour's Grass Roots* (Clarendon Press, 1992), Labour had relatively better results in the 1987 and 1992 general elections in those seats where its organisation was good, and where an active campaigning strategy was pursued.

They showed that if constituency Labour parties in key marginals had recruited extra members and had increased their "activism" rate then the net result would have been an increase in the Labour Party's national share of the vote by as much as 4 per cent—enough to have won last time.

In 1992, Labour took barely half the vote of blue-collar workers, trade unionists, council tenants and the unemployed. The biggest swing to Labour was among the professional and managerial classes, who are now being courted with a "low tax" stance. The smallest swing—a tiny 0.5 per cent—was among semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Labour's vote actually fell among working-class women voters and the turnout in the party's heartlands was well down on the national average.

Motivating Labour's core vote is not at all in conflict with the need to win the floating southern voters identified in a new Fabian study. On the contrary, at a time when the right is ideologically exhausted and reliance on the free market has abjectly failed, both would be attracted by a party that is bold and positive.

Both would also be won over by a credible macro-economic policy that explains the depths of Britain's economic decline and comes clean about the radical solutions needed to reverse it. If Labour is not saying anything fundamentally different on tax, borrowing, interest rates and currency levels, voters will stick with bullish Kenneth Clarke.

Fortunately, John Smith seems to recognise this. His speech to last week's TUC conference abandoned moderniser fudging and gave succinct commitments on the economy and employment rights.

Neither moderniser nor the traditional left provide the answers to Labour's continued electoral failure. Both have failed to unite a party ravaged by defeat and demoralised by false optimism.

An alternative is offered by a new emerging Labour left. It does not rest its appeal on some mythical golden age of cloth cap class conflict. It recognises that the class system has been restructured by gender, occupation and economic diversification. It accepts that the old communities of male-dominated heavy industry, in which labour-movement solidarity and allegiance were forged, have shrunk. It accepts that the party had to update its appeal and adopt new campaigning techniques. It agrees that the operation of the union block vote needed reforming and that the involvement of individual members in party decision-making is desirable. It rejects the statist tradition that has so disfigured and discredited socialists.

Instead, it offers an alternative "libertarian socialist" vision to empower citizens. It also links directly with grass-roots extra-parliamentary action, whether by environmentalists, women's groups, trade unions, neighbourhood campaigns or single-issue pressure groups.

Labour cannot win without adopting more radical policies, without celebrating its socialist values and without campaigning positively and aggressively rather than trimming and twisting.

Peter Hain is the MP for Neath. His latest pamphlet, "What's Left?", price £3, can be obtained from "Tribune", 308 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DY

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Should the left be conservative?

The left is linguistically challenged. That was the conclusion I came to after spending an enjoyable, but intellectually bracing weekend, at Wiston House in Sussex, discussing "Reinventing the left" with European and American politicians, academics and journalists.

Patricia Hewitt, deputy director of the IPPR, which organised the conference, was not fazed by this. "It *is* possible," she asserted at the end of the proceedings, "to translate the abstract, dense and sometimes difficult discourse we have had this weekend into popular forms of communication."

Some of the politicians present, such as Tony Wright MP and Margaret Hodge, were not so sure. All the old campaigning slogans, which worked so well for decades, are now perceived to have a whiff of the Soviet bloc about them, but nobody has yet come up with a snappier, more saleable way of encapsulating a left outlook. The conference was perplexed from the start about this.

One of the most effective communicators there was Michel Rocard, president of the French Socialists, who still has a lingering aura of power about him. He put the blame squarely on the old Soviet Union for identifying socialism with the gulag and disastrous state planning. As a result, he said, "The social democratic project is in great crisis. We have not devoted enough thinking to human beings."

But Rocard was the prime minister of France until 1991, presiding over a social democratic regime. His party was smashed in the recent elections and the right-wing premier, Edouard Balladur, is enjoying a honeymoon with the electorate. Not all the blame for socialism's disarray can be shuffled off on the Soviet bear.

One of the striking features of the conference was that everyone felt the left was in a state of collapse, whether or not it had recently enjoyed—or was still enjoying—power. It was rather depressing for the British contingent, since so much hope is invested in the prospect of a Labour Prime Minister entering Downing Street.

Even so, the continental left has a confidence that Labour lacks. It is partly to do with history and tradition. It is not hung up, for example, about calling itself social democratic. Gordon Brown, who was also present, stuck to the classic Labour formula, British democratic socialism, which sits uncomfortably with the notion of a market economy. But, thanks to the SDP, the use of the term social democracy in Britain brings accusations of betrayal.

Social democracy, as many speakers noted, still has strong roots among the electors of Europe. Indeed, as Rocard suggested, a combination of human rights, pluralist democracy and social protection is what gives Europe its distinctive political identity. Within that framework, there are problems: how to secure full employment is one, taxation is another. People are not always willing to pay for the social protection they want. But Rocard considers it essential for socialist parties to uphold the principles of competition and a market economy. "We have to admit that the market is irreplaceable," he said.

The paper that attracted the most comment and interest over the weekend was given by Wolfgang Streek and Joel Rogers, both from the University of Wisconsin. Its title was: "How the left can run capitalism better than the right." Although Gordon Brown missed this session, it would have struck a chord with him. "Can capitalism be left to the voluntarism of the market," asked Streek, "or is there still a place for the imposition of social discipline on capitalism, which increases rather than detracts from the productive needs of society?" The answer was yes, because capitalism needed a skilled, as well as flexible, workforce. If everything was left to an untrammelled free market, the west would be easily outstripped by the Pacific Rim.

The golden age of social democracy was reached under conservative governments

Ah, but was this a left project, asked a Belgian socialist? Quick as a flash, Rogers responded: "It's an egalitarian, democratic project. If that's not left, so much for the left." This answer impressed. Yet, as another speaker pointed out in the same discussion, the golden age of social democracy was reached under conservative governments in many countries. So what's left?

The Cambridge sociologist Anthony Giddens provided the most thought-provoking answer. He actually gave the opening speech, and so did not hear the question, but his contribution went to the heart of the matter.

"You can have socialist values, but socialism is dead," he declared. He was just as happy to "bury" as to "reinvent" the left. But conservatism was also dead in the Burkeian sense of conserving tradition. It was being killed off by neo-liberalism, whose purpose was to destroy tradition. There was an unstable mix in today's society between fundamentalism—the old values founded on religion and solidarity—and the radicalism of market forces.

That radicalism, Giddens argued, could only be dealt with by "a left that has become conservative". The left should do away with the mindless progressivism that led to the construction of 1960s tower blocks, and defend the idea of the welfare state and the reconstruction of social solidarity.

Such a left-right role reversal is hard to swallow. The left has always believed that history is on its side, and that the right exists to resist change. In order to sweeten the pill, Giddens and many of the other speakers went on to discuss the components of a left programme that could still count as radical: the democratisation of society, the spreading of power and the creation of new solidarities.

This is where language really failed people, although the ideas were good. Partly, it is because the British left is ill at ease with such continental terms as insecurity and solidarity. Gordon Brown made a good stab at defining "community", one of the new buzzwords, but, to my mind, it still evokes the spirit of the Blitz and the sense of closeness that came with back-to-back housing. It does not sound modern.

Perhaps that can change. Brown did at least show how useful and flexible a word it is. "Community" was not synonymous with the state, a geographical entity or a class, he said; it was a recognition that people are interdependent and part of society. Sometimes the community could work through the state, local government or trade unions, but the important thing was that it recognised "the public interest had to be met".

Giddens' own recommendation was for "dialogic democracy": a tolerant, multi-layered, open society. The real challenge, he argued, was to make social solidarity compatible with individualism.

Responding to Giddens, Perry Anderson of *New Left Review* wondered: "Can democracy just be conceived as a matter of dialogue?" Politics, he pointed out, used to be defined by the oppositional distinction between friend and foe. "Isn't there a danger of going to the opposite extreme, where you're just talking about friends and not about enemies?"

Oh, for the old certainties of class warfare! Socialism is returning to its ethical, pre-Marxist, Christian roots, where it really adds up to being nice to people. Perhaps that is not, after all, such a difficult idea to put across.

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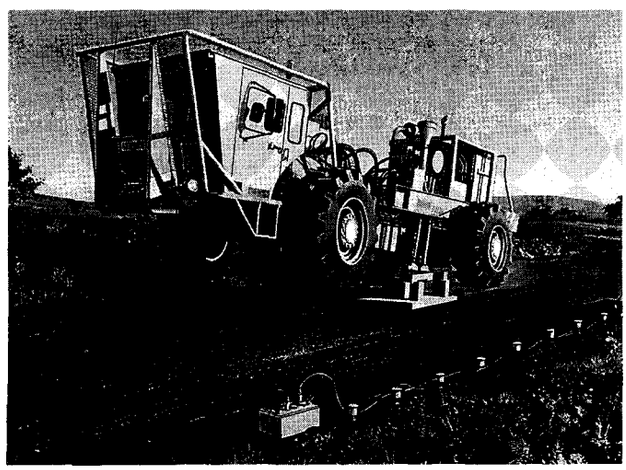
The Sellafield Project.

It looks all right on the surface but what happens when you dig a little deeper?

As far as the eye is concerned, the Sellafield Repository, if built, would barely be noticeable.

But what the eye won't immediately see is the very high degree of care which will be in evidence underground.



By mechanically thumping the earth and listening to the echoes we can see where the different rock strata lie.

A major feat of engineering, the Sellafield Repository would be dedicated to the safe and permanent disposal of intermediate and some low-level radioactive waste.

WHY NOT STORE THE WASTE ABOVE GROUND?

We're talking about isolating radioactive waste from the human environment so that it is safe for the very long-term future. Storing it above ground is safe for now, but no one can guarantee that it will be looked after so safely for thousands of years.

Above ground, the radioactive waste would always be someone else's problem. Generation after generation of people would have to maintain it. And in time they would almost certainly elect to dispose of it properly as we're proposing now.

Isolating radioactive waste deep underground puts it out of harm's way once and for all, provided that the conditions are right. And that is why we are carrying out the most thorough geological investigations ever seen in Britain.

And when you consider all the facts and assess all eventualities, we hope you'll agree the safest place for radioactive waste is deep underground.

WHERE WOULD THE WASTE GO EXACTLY?

Half a mile below ground in hard volcanic rock a series of caverns would be excavated where intermediate and low-level radioactive waste could be emplaced.

We're using the latest techniques to build up a picture of the rock formations beneath

Concrete excavated from the foundati of Hadrian's Wall shows how well simi materials can withstand the centuries.

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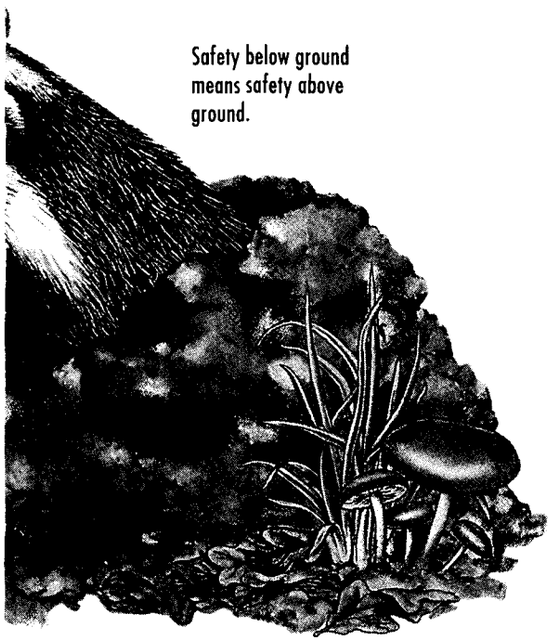
A fossil from 1500 feet which has lain undisturbed for millions of years.

the Sellafield area.

By measuring gravity, the earth's magnetic field, and by mechanically thumping the earth and listening to the echoes, we can see where the different strata and rock fractures lie and take them into account in our plans.

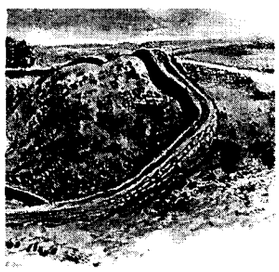
The Repository would be surrounded on all sides by hundreds of metres of rock, and there waste should remain, where Ice Ages can come and go with little effect.

Low-level waste, such as steel and rubble from the decommissioning of nuclear plants, will be packed into steel drums or boxes.

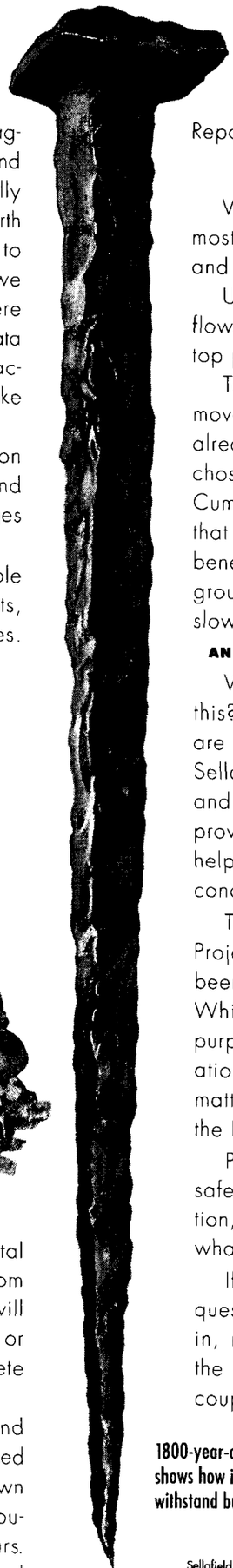


Safety below ground means safety above ground.

Intermediate-level waste, such as metal cladding, sludges, plastics and rubber from the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel, will be concreted into stainless steel drums or steel or concrete boxes.



Concrete and other cement-based materials are known to survive for thousands of years. These were used in ancient China, Egypt and Greece. In fact this is one of their main purposes in the Repository.



1800-year-old Roman nail shows how iron and steel can withstand burial underground.

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Water permeates even the most solid rock through cracks and fissures.

Understanding the deep water flows at Sellafield is one of our top priorities.

To examine ground water movement at depth, we have already drilled at carefully chosen locations in West Cumbria and initial signs are that in the basement rock, beneath the Sellafield area, ground water movement is very slow.

AN OPEN DOOR TO INFORMATION

Why are we telling you this? Because we know there are concerns surrounding the Sellafield Repository Project and it is our hope that by providing the facts we can help allay some of these concerns.

The Sellafield Repository Project Information Centre has been opened in Lowther Street, Whitehaven, with the sole purpose of providing information on request about any matter or issue which relates to the Repository.

Please do talk to us about safety, waste disposal, disruption, environmental issues, or whatever concerns you most.

If you have a specific question right now, either call in, ring us or write it down in the space provided in the coupon.

Sellafield Repository Project Information Unit is jointly staffed by United Kingdom Nirex Limited and British Nuclear Fuels plc.

If you have a question about any aspect of the Sellafield Project, please write it down in the space provided here and send it to: The Sellafield Repository Project Information Centre, Cumberland House, Lowther Street, Whitehaven CA28 7AH, or call us free on 0800 243 010.

Name					Postcode
Address					
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SELLAFIELD
REPOSITORY PROJECT
INFORMATION CENTRE

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SIDELINERS

John Monks, the TUC's new General Secretary, is lucky. Had he begun his quest to improve relations with the Employment Secretary six months ago, Michael Howard's stony, oil-coated heart would have eluded his grasp.

David Hunt is another kettle of fish, of the "wet" variety. A protégé of Peter (now Lord) Walker, he followed him as Welsh Secretary in 1990. To make his ambitious way up the slippery pole during Mrs Thatcher's 15 years as leader, he oft had to bend his knee, including extolling her poll tax. But, like Lynda (now Baroness) Chalker, he comes from the Heath era's liberal, European-minded Young Conservatives. His first big splash was attacking Enoch Powell's implicit racialism at the Tories' 1972 conference, which cost him his Drake candidacy. But, in 1976, he inherited Selwyn Lloyd's large majority in the Wirral by-election.

Luckily for Monks, Hunt seeks in Employment the constructive achievements he abandoned in Wales when promoted in last May's reshuffle. He is sensitive to the charge that he abandoned the Welsh to the untender mercies of John Redwood, the cabinet's right-wing Iceman. Hunt's desire for improved industrial relations is motivated in part by his ambition to become the next Tory leader but one. He counts on icebreaker-Chancellor Kenneth Clarke to break the continuing Thatcherite domination of Tory MPs. But should he sink in the effort, Hunt would like to emerge as the main "wet" challenger.

The problem for this long-term ambition, and Hunt's more immediate search for an accommodation with the unions is the continuing domination of the Tories' parliamentary organisations by small businessmen, despite the recession's recent slaughter of their ilk, especially in the south. Largely climbers of working-class origins, their main drive is to change from being small businessmen into big businessmen, like Welwyn's self-parodying contract-cleaning millionaire, David Evans, son of a postal worker. For them, the essence of Thatcherism is getting the government and the unions "off our backs" by cutting taxes, wages and regulations, including safety regulations.

Graham Bright, whose role as PPS enables his round affable face to appear on our TV screens with his boss, John Major, is typical. The son of a Labour-voting Essex farm labourer, he made his fortune as the distributor of a sugar substitute. Before becoming PPS, his main activity was as a director and vice-chairman of the Tories' Small Business Bureau, whose object has been the scaling down of Labour's 1970s' employment protection legislation.

Major is trying to break this current domination of Tory parliamentary organisations by the likes of Sir Marcus Fox and John Townend. But the final reversal of the dominant role of small businessmen requires the loss of their seats. Bright was agreeably surprised in April 1992 that Major's appeal enabled him to hold on to threatened Luton South, even by a slender 799 votes.

Andrew Roth

EDWARD PEARCE

Glad, confident morning dawns for the Lib Dems in Torquay, but they are trying to be humble about it

It wouldn't be natural if the Liberal Democrats were not feeling chipper. No political party for a long time has looked so much in essential harmony with that song from *Oklahoma*. After something rhetorical about the corn being as high as an elephant's eye, the party concerned expands generally about it being a beautiful morning and concludes that everything is going his way. Pleasing Torquay, represented in parliament by unpleasing Rupert Allason, overweight ferret into the nonsenses of "Intelligence", will have a week of smiling Liberal faces and might well have one of its own next time.

But triumphalism is off. Mr Ashdown, in whom the military instinct is never remote, is attempting like the Colonel of Heavy Dragoons in *Patience* to give his troops the order, "By the centre, one, two . . . humility and restraint". It isn't easy; those useful chaps at Plymouth who had the smart idea of collating local government by-election results, not something that we sit up all night with David Dimbleby to hear about, are issuing scary figures. From the swing of this year, which swept the Lib Dems into shared control of 13 counties and flew that Swedish flag—yellow cross superimposed over blue background—Lib Dem performance has actually improved.

Then, as county councillors running committees, they subtly grew in 60 southern constituencies. They are the first quoted source in the local papers, which outreach Mr Murdoch in influence. Are they split? Well, they don't think they are.

There was a momentary frisson when the very high and early take-up of delegate places was noted. This couldn't be Michael Meadowcroft rising from his grave could it? Mr Meadowcroft would be about as welcome as Fred Trueman at a gathering of cricket-lovers. Early registration is probably just one more proof of the growth of enthusiasm and numbers. Incidentally, another quiet joy is the suspicion, with membership way above the 100,000 mark and Labour's figures of hard active membership notoriously vague, that the Lib Dems may not be that far off what the Italians called *Il Sorpasso*.

Mr Ashdown's proposed moderation is very wise however. His party is currently conducting the delicate manoeuvre of getting off the hook of Mr Ashdown's overdone enthusiasm for the free market at Eastbourne. He is a man of sudden impulses and charges, which have to be diverted, usually by his own later judgment. Such spurts can also be a strength producing a straight up and down high moral stand, either wrong, as on Bosnia, or right, as on taxation. Over taxation, he is joined by the hard heads of the party, who see no possible merit in tying their hands as non-taxers. Not having Labour's deep historic reputation as a pip-squeezer, they just don't need the penitential habit worn by Gordon Brown.

They can say that tax should not be lightly put up but that if a government wants to do something that the country supports, tax is the honest way of paying. The view is that people are not so much anti-tax, especially if it is earmarked for popular ends, they simply don't trust Labour (wrongly) not to tax like demented billyo. Ironically, Lib Dem freedom of moral action here has made life harder for that later pilgrim to the free market, Mr Brown. Always something of a moaner, Gordon Brown has apparently been complaining bitterly to friends that the Ashdown high ground on tax is being cited by Labour people to his left (that's a lot of people) as a reason for Labour retaining a responsible tax option.

The idea of the coffee-morning party being both bigger than Labour and to the left of it is a bitter one

The idea of the little local party of the municipal centre, the coffee-morning party, being both bigger than Labour and to the left of it is a bitter one from which we should expect repercussion. One fact already established is that Lib-Lab talk, very sensible in many cross-party eyes, will not be heard from the platform.

The phrase used to me was of "a hand having been held out and not taken". Labour's narrow Scottish and Northern rigours, her inability to think herself out of the paper bag of her inheritance, is sad, but no immediate tribulation to the Lib Dems.

There will be no talk at Torquay about going away to prepare for government. It will be more a matter of going away to carry on with local government, which is more than John Major can say to *his* people, and also one of carrying on carrying on. They thrive on it.

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The revival of the hippy rock musical Hair at London's Old Vic this week was as entertaining for its illumination of how things have changed since the original in 1968 as for the actual performances on stage. Gone were lyricist James Rado's references to heroin ("mainline" was mystifyingly re-rendered as "starlight"); and when it came to the free-love sleep-in that is probably better remembered from the original than its overall anti-war theme —well, Aids-era proprieties demanded that the cast appear carrying enough condoms for the whole audience to have joined in the orgy as well.

Twenty five years after the summer of love was drawing to a close seems as good a time as any to print this request from sociology student Elizabeth Rowley (19 Cross Street, Scarborough, YO11 1HP). She is researching the sixties' hippy/counter-culture.

"I am incorporating the theme of military jackets purchased at the 'I was Lord Kitchener's Valet' boutique in London's Portobello Road. If there is anyone out there who bought these jackets, I would like to hear from you! Also, if anyone knows of the original owner and whatever happened to him, I would like details with a view to an interview." Since even Keith Flett confessed on these pages a few weeks ago to being an erstwhile hippy, there must be some NSS readers who can help Ms Rowley. Laurie Taylor is supervising her research, but I promise not to publish any article he writes disclosing the identity of anyone who owns up to having once been possessed of such sartorial inelegance.

The revival of interest in all things hippy reminded me of some of the "modern" renditions of old plays that began to appear in British theatres around the same time as Hair. The liberalising effect of the abolition of stage censorship didn't just extend to stage nudity; the climate it engendered also produced a rash of experimental—some would say blasphemous—productions of stage classics. I particularly remember the Liverpool Everyman's versions of Shakespeare in the early seventies, when attempts were made to make the Bard's work more accessible to modern audiences by devices such as having the leading characters in Measure for Measure coming onto the stage on scooters.

Both John Danser, of Penarth, and Frank Bowles, of Saffron Walden, deal with this issue of accessibility in relation to Jonathan Romney's review (27 August) of Kenneth Branagh's film Much Ado About Nothing. Romney wrote: "The problem isn't that the film sells itself so heavily as an accessible entertainment, dispelling any kind of elitist mystique, but that it does it so unimaginatively."

Danser asks: "In heaven's name, how is it possible to sell a Shakespeare play through the medium of cinema as 'an accessible entertainment' without it having been done imaginatively?" He also says Romney contradicts himself. "Having described the film as 'accessible', he goes on to assert that because the cast is uneven in skill and the film is shot in an 'idyllic 14th-century villa', the audience expresses feelings of exclusion. How can an entertainment be said to be 'accessible' at the same time it is claimed that the audience feels excluded?" Danser viewed the film in Cardiff—"where the audience was far from being a sophisticated West End one" but nevertheless was "palpably rapt, spellbound, till the very last steps of the bergamask with which the film concluded".

Frank Bowles watched it in Cambridge where he "enjoyed every minute of it . . . So I believe did the rest of the sold-out house." He says Romney "seems to prefer strange versions of Shakespeare featuring rubber duck factories and then complains of the audience being excluded because Branagh regards the play as comic and lusty and because American actors were used. Of course, someone who reveals his wide knowledge of filmed Shakespeare by chucking in a reference to a lugubrious Finnish absurdist would know all about accessible entertainment." Bowles predicts "great success" for the film: "And, who knows, those American actors may increase sales in the US. Is that bad?"

Steve Platt

Out from the dark days

Taxation policy is a complex area. Misunderstanding is common. But the debate about policies on tax and spending is so important for Labour, it serves no one if it proceeds on the basis of misrepresentation and the continuing repetition of errors.

Edward Pearce (Political Sketch, 3 September) and Ian Aitken ("Brown's Thatcherite gobbledegook", 3 September) worked themselves up into an absurd frenzy, starting with the accusation that I had abandoned progressive taxation. They even accused me of an economic policy similar to that of the Tories, and of deserting the unemployed.

I can understand how some sloppy newspaper reporting over the summer weeks might have given them this impression, but they could never have reached these conclusions if they had bothered to read the speeches they criticise. As I stated, for example, "It is crucial on tax and spending not to imitate the Tories but to tie tax and spending to the objectives we as a society want to embrace . . ."

I am supposed to have announced tax rates for a future Labour government. Wrong. I am supposed to have abandoned public services. Untrue. I said that Britain had to invest and spend money for the benefit of the community as a whole. I am accused of deserting the unemployed. I have proposed a major package of measures to end mass unemployment. I am supposed to have abandoned progressive taxation, yet I never fail to mention the overriding priority that, unlike Tory taxation policy, Labour taxation policy will be based on fairness. Indeed, my aim had been to lay down the guidelines on tax that Labour will follow—not taxing for its own sake; linking the tax we pay to the benefits we as individuals, and as a community, receive; and—unlike the Tories—taxing fairly and on the basis of the progressive principle.

Perhaps the complaint Mr Pearce and Mr Aitken really have is that I refuse to commit myself—as some have sought—to a shopping list of manifesto items in the first year or so of opposition, without recognising that circumstances can change. A refusal to throw numbers around cannot be equated with abandoning principles.

Mr Pearce says that I have no interest in a distinctive macro-economic policy. Yet in the same set of speeches, I not only state that Labour will not be "hidebound by the government's macro-economic policy", but I go on to spell out that: "The goals of our policies, especially in respect of industry and employment, are wholly different, and we have repeatedly said so. The position on borrowing or spending and monetary policy and the exchange rate will therefore rightly differ accordingly." Indeed, our conference document not only lays down our distinctive goals—including full and fulfilling employment—but outlines how we will, unlike the Tories, use all the instruments of policy to achieve those goals. But what I will not do is pluck figures for borrowing out of the air, taking whatever the government's current PSBR is, adding to it by billions, and claim this is a credible or radical policy.

Underlying the Pearce-Aitken approach is the assumption that to talk sense about tax and spending, you cannot be radical in your economic policy. I disagree. I have not only outlined what I believe is a new fairness agenda for British politics—including progressive taxation, an assault on entrenched interests, and integrated economic and social policies to provide pathways out of poverty for millions—but have also suggested that at the heart of it lies a new economic egalitarianism whose whole purpose is to enhance the value of labour and promote new employment and economic opportunities for all. In short, Labour can be bold without returning to the dark days of 1983.

Gordon Brown
Labour Treasury spokesperson
House of Commons
London SW1

From vicious to virtuous

Home Secretary Michael Howard is "playing politics" ("Howard's prison prejudice", 10 September), but it's time, in any case, to question the punishment mania that regularly surfaces when the Tory Party's annual conference is in the offing.

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The rehabilitation ideal, as against the punitive obsession, was given succinct expression by the late David Fraser, a member of the Kilbrandon Committee, which established the hearing system for young people in Scotland: "We have to be against what they have done, but still be on their side."

It's less easy, however, to separate crime from punishment, and the offence from the offender, than it is to separate disability, or handicap, from the person who happens to be disabled or handicapped. The difficulty stems from a still widely prevalent belief in original sin. Even Lord Scarman believes that violent, anti-social behaviour is an innate attribute of "human nature"—legitimate and essential for survival when it is *my* violence that is in question, but urgently requiring to be cursed when what is in question is *someone else's* violence.

In fact, violence is a *learned* response. Engels called it "the engine of progress". First came outwardly directed, barbaric or *genocidal* violence. Then, with the growth of the nation states (when criminal justice, and the newly established police, took over from the military), it metamorphosed itself into *structural* violence, as the governments of the new civil states forced their subjects to conform through "class-based", political, legal, economic and social structures, which had less to do with justice than with social control and which were designed, in Foucault's words, "to discipline and punish".

Central as it was to structural violence, criminal justice has now become suicidal, or counterproductive, not only in terms of being accident prone, but also in terms of costs, and—above all—in terms of a steadily accelerating vicious circle of offending and re-offending. Prisons are certainly monuments to the past, but we need to rethink the whole basis of our approach to criminal justice. The punitive obsession is still with us because original sin is still with us. As a learned response, however, violence *can* be unlearned; divisive, class-based social structures based on hierarchy and competition *can* be replaced by supportive structures, functioning in terms of conflict resolution techniques; and the vicious circle of criminal justice *can* become a virtuous one.

Drummond Hunter
Director
The Howard League (Scotland)
Edinburgh

THIS ENGLAND

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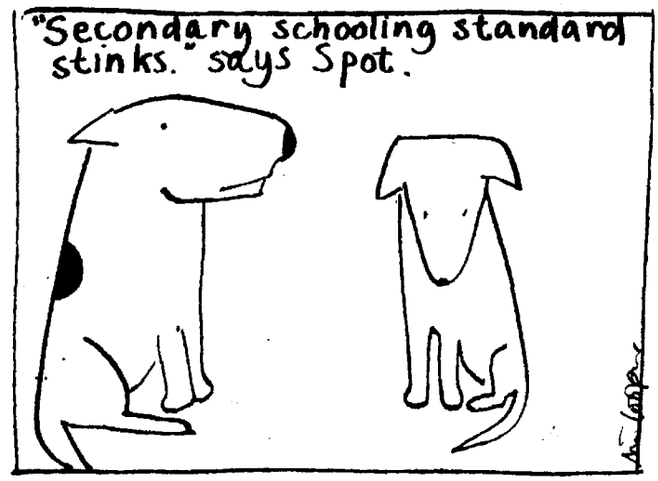
• Sciences are learning facts from a book and not thinking for yourself; I wanted to express my own ideas and think for myself.—A-level student in the *Daily Telegraph* (Tim Hopkins)

• I was in favour of opening Buckingham Palace to the general public until I looked at the front page of your newspaper.

The sheer vulgarity of the picture of the man in shorts and the woman in red, white and blue changed my mind. Can we really allow the image of the monarchy to be tarnished by people so attired traipsing through the Queen's London residence?—Letter in the *Daily Telegraph* (Brenda Rowe)



Tribute to Thompson

Rae Street (Letters, 10 September) rightly suggests that it would be a fitting tribute to Edward Thompson if efforts towards a nuclear-free world were renewed. There will be just such a tribute at the Rally for a Nuclear Free World, which takes place at Westminster Central Hall, London SW1, on Saturday 9 October; Donald Soper will introduce the rally, at which there will be speakers from the Pacific, India, the Ukraine, and from the Shoshone people of the Nevada test site. At this rally, Edward Thompson will be lovingly and gratefully remembered. Susannah York has agreed to read some of his prose and poetry. On 18 June, Edward wrote to me to say "my chances of speaking in London on 9 October are slim . . ." Sadly, he was right. But his conviction that the power for change is in our own hands will live on. Meanwhile, an Edward Thompson celebration in London within the next few weeks is being planned. The date and other details will be announced as soon as possible.

Bruce Kent
Chair, Planning Committee
Rally for a Nuclear Free World
London N1

The fight for Kashmir

Andrew Whitehead states that Pakistan may be involved in training and arming Kashmiri insurgents ("Killing time in Kashmir", 3 September). It is indeed shocking that western journalists still only suspect Pakistani involvement in Kashmir, even though since its very inception in 1947 Pakistan has been consistently interfering in the internal affairs of India—especially in Kashmir.

Only a few days after its creation, Pakistan launched a pre-emptive attack on the Kashmir Valley, which forced the then Maharaja of Kashmir to seek Indian help by signing the Instrument of Accession. From that day on, the state of Jammu and Kashmir legally became a part of the Indian federation.

Pakistan's second attempt to capture Kashmir by force was in August 1965. The strategy adopted was similar to that in 1947; infiltrators were sent to create chaos, and then a full-scale military intervention followed. The late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then Pakistan's foreign secretary, denied any Pakistan involvement but later admitted to his country's intervention quite openly, in his biography published in 1979. Having failed to capture Kashmir by military means, Pakistan has now resorted to political destabilisation through a carefully planned Muslim insurgency. In 1990, Benazir Bhutto's government announced the setting up of a £20 million fund in order to finance the "Kashmir struggle".

The west must realise that Kashmir remains the spinal cord of the Indian secular and democratic polity. If it should ever be allowed to secede from the Indian union, it could start a chain reaction that could result in the dismemberment not only of India, but also of Pakistan.

Randir Singh Bains
Gants Hill
Essex

More than suitable

Ms de Meaner suggested that my story about the dogs *Sandy and Spot* (Weekend Competition, 10 September) was suitable for three-year-olds. Where has she been for the past 20 years? This is a GCSE set book.

Tim Hopkins
Luton

Murdoch's freedom

In his article on Rupert Murdoch, Roy Greenslade ("Sky's not the limit", 11 September) quotes Gerald Kaufman (of vague memory): "With or without Murdoch, technological change is going to transform what we can watch on our TV sets." The point is, "technological" becomes "political"; "transform" becomes "determine"; and "can" becomes "shall". So, with or without Murdoch, *political* change is going to *determine* what we *shall* watch on our TV sets.

Murdoch, with a developed appetite for power, as well as riches and commercial dominance, may need to woo governments as partners, sleeping or otherwise, to buttress

Min Cooper

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and expand his "empire". Governments can be bought, in one way or another, and Murdoch was a member of Thatcher's kitchen cabinet.

As to new technology opening up newspaper competition, the new freedom is illusory; money, also, can reduce this handsomely. After all, Murdoch controls 80 per cent of Australian newspapers and magazines, and the 30 pence *Times* could well see the *Independent* off.

Noel Ratcliffe
Buxton
Derbyshire

Never mind the royals

The Letter From East Timor (*NSS*, 3 September) will have added significance when Australian prime minister Paul Keating visits Britain and Ireland this month. Australia, one of the most vocal apologists for the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, has been taken to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) by the Portuguese government over its oil treaty with Jakarta. The Timor Gap Treaty was intended to divide the oil and gas reserves in the disputed maritime boundary between East Timor and Australia. As early as 1975, Australian ambassador Dick Woolcott recommended to Canberra that such a treaty could be "much more readily negotiated with Indonesia than with Portugal or an independent Portuguese Timor", adding: "I may be recommending a practical rather than principled stand, but that is what national interest and foreign policy is all about." If the treaty is ruled illegal by the ICJ, Australia would be obliged to withdraw from the agreement. Not only will Australia and Indonesia have a disputed maritime boundary between them, but, more importantly, their attempts to carve up the natural resources of an illegally occupied territory will be under the spotlight.

When Paul Keating visits here, the Queen's future as head of state should be the last subject to be addressed. It is time Australia was confronted about this treaty, and was taught to stop pretending to be a country under a colonial yoke. It is Australia's Timorese wartime allies who deserve to be "masters of their destiny".

Kenneth Westmoreland
York

Correction:

In last week's NSS, an article by Chris Game and John Stewart ("Labour lets it all hang out") gave the wrong names for the authors of the book The Politics of Hung Councils. The authors of this book are, in fact, S Leach and J Stewart. NSS apologises for the mistake

The wit of Martin Fagg

I was saddened to read of the recent death of Martin Fagg (Weekend Competition, 3 September). He was, without doubt, a most brilliant wit and parodist; for more than 30 years he provided lovers of literary competitions with immense pleasure and laughter.

Martin's prolific literary skill is well represented in the anthologies of prize-winning entries in the Weekend Competitions. His parodies, pastiches, gruesomes, satires, clerihews, cautionary tales, burlesques, odes and pure piss-takes deserve an encyclopaedic volume of their own. The contributions of his numerous pseudonyms would fill a second tome.

In 1979, competitors were asked to devise clerihews on regular contributors to the *New Statesman*, as it was then. This winning entry from Dan Hazlewood (another pseudonym?) is perhaps a fitting epitaph on the best all-round humourist since Flann O'Brien: "Mr Martin Fagg/Isn't one to brag,/But keeps a teeny weeny list/Of entries that missed."

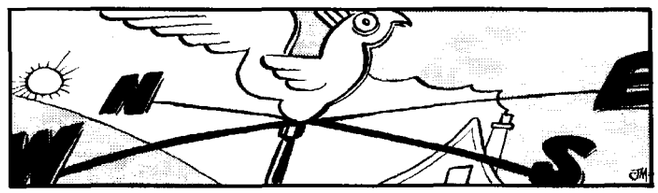
John O'Byrne
Dublin
Ireland

Beware the penguin peril

Pat Coyne ("The ice age cometh", 3 September) has added to my worries. On top of everything else, there is now a good chance that we shall be trampled to death by flock of stampeding penguins.

George Cowley
Warndon
Worcester

FRINGE BENEFITS



Colin Ward laments the decline of architectural journals

In the face of the technical revolution that was going to make printing and publishing cheap and simple, it isn't only socialists who find it hard to support a viable press. Take the world of architecture and planning.

Having witnessed the decline of once-famous journals in this field, inside-dopesters don't know whether to laugh or cry at the reports that a new architectural monthly is to appear next March at £2.50. For most of my life, the outstanding journals were the monthly *Architectural Review* and the weekly *Architects' Journal*. Both were from a private firm that subsidised its unprofitable, but public-spirited ventures, from the sales of its purely technical literature.

Both attracted a readership far beyond the professionals. Their frequent special issues, from Jim Richards' study of early industrial buildings in the *AR* to Malcolm MacEwen's pioneering 1959 account of the environmental impact of the car, Motropolis, in the *AJ*, became items endlessly sought by librarians. But both world-famous journals were too good for the 1980s. They were bought by Maxwell Business Communications, and their editors strove to keep up the quality. After the Maxwell collapse they were taken over by a magazine-publishing house called EMAP, and everything that made them special was whittled away.

My heart goes out to their editors, desperately clinging to older, broader values. But the same decline is happening in the journals of the professional institutes with their automatic paid-up subscription list of members.

When I first worked for an architect in 1941, I would spend lunchtime flipping through his piles of back numbers of the *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* from the 1930s. In the depth of the depression, with half the membership out of work, it managed to be a journal of record, invaluable for historians, *and* to include important scholarly papers. I still have some, which I ripped out when the journals were thrown out for wartime paper salvage.

That journal also had periods of glory in the 1960s, under the editorship of that same Malcolm MacEwen, and in the 1970s, under his successor Roger Barnard. But Barnard was fired when the then president of the institute decided that it didn't want a journal that put architecture in a setting of social realities and the growing tide of criticism of postwar building.

You'd think that an automatic circulation of 22,000 would make a journal viable. But this summer, the RIBA had a "relaunch" with a commercial publisher. I bought the first issue at the non-members' price of £4. It had 34 pages of text, some of them simply "product-promotion". The same transition is happening at the Royal Town Planning Institute. Ten years ago, it brought in a new editor, Anthony Fyson, to make its journal relevant and readable. He succeeded. But the *RTPI* has decided to sell its rights to a commercial firm, Haymarket Magazines Ltd, which will produce, from this month, *Planning Week* as its official journal.

The only word of protest I have read comes from a well-known planner, David Lock, writing in a different monthly, *Town & Country Planning*. This is the journal, starved of advertising revenue, that comes not from the experts, but from the Town & Country Planning Association, a poverty-stricken voluntary body that has tried for a century to promote planning as a popular campaign for a better environment.

I'm cynical about next year's new monthly because it will be funded by The Prince of Wales Institute. Prince Charles will also be a contributor. It will include articles on house decoration, arts and crafts, landscape and gardens. The prince wants "an architecture of the heart and soul", and no doubt it will cater for that aspect of its readership. All those redundant editors had more modest aims. They just wanted to put architecture and planning into a *social* context.

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Ray Milland in "The Lost Weekend"/Kobal collection

Studies indicate that alcoholic drinks cut deaths from heart disease, says **John Duffy**. Yet health authorities seem strangely reluctant to publicise the fact

Drinking your health

Fifteen men on the dead man's chest
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!
Drink and the Devil had done for the rest—
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!

Stevenson voices the majority opinion—drink is tempting and destructive in equal measure. Literature abounds with images linking drink and death. There are a few dissenters, more out of contrariness, one suspects, than belief. "Man, being reasonable, must get drunk; The best of life is but intoxication," wrote Byron in *Don Juan*. Yet it now looks as if Byron may have had more reason on his side than probably even he suspected.

Over 20 major studies, in several countries, have found that the risk of death, particularly from coronary heart disease (CHD), is lower among light and moderate drinkers than among abstainers. In Britain, a ten-year study of 1,500 civil servants found those who drank up to four units a day (a unit is about half a pint of beer, a normal measure of spirits or a glass of wine) had a death rate around two-thirds of those who abstained. The even larger British Regional Heart Study followed 7,700 men over seven years and also found that death rates were cut by a third for those who drank between 16 and 42 units a week.

The apparent protective effect of alcohol against mortality from CHD is a major source of controversy. This is hardly surprising. Epidemiology is, for the most part, an observational rather than an experimental science, making conclusive demonstration of effects difficult, and this case is further complicated by the problems associated with all alcohol research. First, there is no general agreement on exactly why mortality is reduced, although there have been some plausible suggestions. Drinking may boost the body's production of "good" cholesterol (high-density lipoproteins) and may also cut the blood's tendency to form the clots that can lead to blocked arteries and heart attacks.

Second, and probably more important, the conclusion that drinking may be beneficial runs counter to the conventional wisdom on health. As a result, there seems to be a marked reluctance to publicise the fact, even though Britain has one of the highest rates of CHD in the world, particularly for men. In 1991, 125,000 men in England and Wales died from diseases of the circulation system, of which CHD is the largest single element, out of a total of male deaths of 277,000.

To outline briefly the principal methods and results of these studies, a group of people are asked how much they drink. They are then followed up for several years, and the numbers of people dying from various causes are tabulated by their alcohol consumption level. It is found that, for some causes, there are higher proportions of deaths among abstainers than among light, moderate, and even, in some studies, heavy drinkers. Alcohol consumption, it appears, is in some way "protecting" them. Even more surprisingly, given that we know that drinking is a risk factor in, among other things, liver cirrhosis, certain cancers and accidents, in many studies *total* mortality is less among light and moderate drinkers than among abstainers. Red wine

Mine's a panacea: Is drink a cure-all or a killer?

in particular has achieved some media prominence as a protective factor against heart disease, but most research indicates that the effect is related to alcoholic drinks in general, and not to a specific type.

Initially, controversy centred on attempts to explain the protective effect as arising artificially from the method of investigation. When people are asked about their alcohol consumption, they tend to under-report it. Some methods of measurement also misclassify the amounts drunk by the subjects. This leads to a reduction in the apparent levels of consumption associated with particular effects or in the magnitude of those effects. However, neither measurement *per se*, nor the untruthfulness of respondents, can explain the apparent protection.

A more telling point is that respondents are only asked about current consumption, not about lifetime consumption. Abstainers may have previously been drinkers, but have stopped drinking because they were ill, and therefore at higher risk of dying during the follow-up period. This would indeed lead to a spurious protective effect of alcohol consumption, and has been the subject of a great deal of investigation. It is now generally acknowledged, however, that, even if there is an element of "sick quitter" bias in the data, the protective effect persists.

One possible problem, that potentially besets all epidemiological studies, does remain. People who were predisposed to drink might also tend to be resistant to, say, heart disease, which would make it appear that consumption itself was the protective factor, even if it actually had no effect at all. Most studies have attempted to detect these so-called "confounding" factors and adjust for them in their analyses, but the possibility of an unrecognised confounder remains.

Although there are still aspects of the controversy to be resolved, current opinion is that alcohol drinking really does have a protective effect against CHD, and as a result against mortality from all causes. In the most recent issue of the *American Journal of Public Health* a newer controversy is aired. The question now is not whether the protective effect exists, but whether it should influence health education and policy.

Over the past 20 years or so, "control of consumption" has dominated public-health debate on alcohol-related problems. The fundamental principle is that alcohol policies should aim to reduce overall national consumption, rather than, for example, persuade heavy and problem drinkers to moderate their drinking or stop altogether. Justification is somewhat protean. One argument is that if total consumption falls, so does the proportion of heavy drinkers, and hence the number of alcohol problems. As a backstop, to counter critics who suspect that heavy drinkers might not behave as assumed by the theory, it is argued that light and moderate drinking also carries small risks that it would be desirable to reduce.

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The possibility that light and moderate consumption of alcohol might actually be beneficial to health destroys this second argument, which was developed mainly because the first was so obviously deficient. The "sensible limits" approach of health educators and the UK Department of Health will also stand in substantial need of revision, if it is found that there are net health benefits associated with consumption of more than 21 units of alcohol per week, the current "sensible limit" for men. This would be particularly embarrassing, given that the limits, although not scientifically derived, are explicitly involved in government health targets.

Committed alcohol researchers are naturally drawn to health advocacy—after all, we all want our work to have practical application for the common good. Many voices counsel against diluting the alcohol control message with any acknowledgement that moderate consumption might be beneficial to health. Gerry Shaper, a British epidemiologist who was associated with the "sick quitter" argument, maintains that the protective effect of consumption against CHD is counter-balanced by increased risk of other illness. He asserts that the protective effect of alcohol against CHD occurs at levels of three or more drinks per day, and any benefit will be outweighed by other consequences of drinking at these levels. While this is probably true in terms of daily consumption of six or more drinks per day, it is much less obviously applicable at the three to five drinks per day level. Studies of all-cause mortality indicate that minimum mortality probably occurs at a consumption level between 15 and 35 units per week for middle-aged men in the UK.

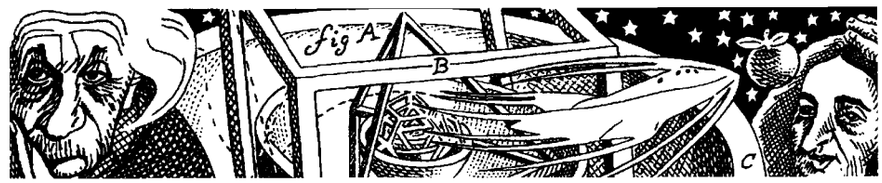
The same line can be found in the *Sensible Drinking* section of *Better Living—Better Life*, a Department of Health sponsored resource for primary health care, which claims that the level of alcohol consumption needed to protect against CHD is outweighed by the increased risk of mortality from other alcohol-related causes. Ironically, this statement is contradicted by a graph on the same page.

Some argue simply for a united front, and the absence of mixed messages. While making sense from a PR and educational point of view, what is this united front for or against? A public health message that is clear and simple, but wrong, is not a good message.

Attempts, however well-intentioned, to keep the issue low-profile, and to avoid changing existing health information, are probably futile, if not actually counter-productive. CHD is the biggest single cause of death in Britain. It would need very powerful counter-arguments to prevent publicising a method which could cut that rate significantly. The debate raises questions of ethics as well as of public health policy. It is in everyone's interest for it to be as open and well-informed as possible.

John C Duffy is director, statistics and information, with the Alcohol Research Group of the University of Edinburgh and is the author of "Alcohol and Illness—the epidemiological viewpoint" (Edinburgh University Press)

DIELECTRICS



"Early ripe, early rot" is often said to describe child prodigies. **Pat Coyne** asks whether it is true

Do child prodigies make you sick? Do you admit to an inward glow of satisfaction when you hear that some budding five-year-old Einstein or Mozart has become burnt out at 15? If so, you are almost certainly in the majority, but that does not necessarily make you right, as John Radford pointed out at the recent meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. "Such sentiments used of any other category of children—handicapped, say, or coloured—would be unthinkable. There is an underlying sense that extraordinary children are somehow abnormal."

Radford, emeritus professor of psychology at the University of East London, has long studied gifted children, and his conclusions run counter to many a received wisdom. The phenomenon—and the associated reactions—are hardly new. "The early bloom of talent is rarely followed by the fruits of great achievement," wrote the Roman author, Quintilian, while Cesare Lombroso, the man who gave us the idea of the mad scientist, asserted in 1891 that "a man who has genius at five is mad at 15", and claimed that any lunatic asylum would bear this out.

The reality, as ever, is rather more complex. Mozart started composing at five, and John Stuart Mill, sometimes regarded as the most imtelligent human being who ever lived, with an estimated IQ of 190, began learning Greek at age three and went on from there. Both maintained and developed their abilities into adulthood. Another who would register high on the emetic scale was William Rowan Hamilton, who mastered Hebrew by seven and Latin, Greek, French, German and a host of other languages by 12, while at the same time taking on the greatest calculators of the day at mental arithmetic. He went to Trinity College Dublin, came first in every subject in which he entered, and was appointed a professor of astronomy before he graduated. For his sins, he went on to become one of the greatest mathematicians of the 19th century.

So it may come as a relief to hear of the likes of Erwin Nyireghazi (1903-1987), a singer at age one, composer at four and concert pianist at 15, who after a disastrous marriage fled to California and was little heard from again. And then there was William James Sidis (1898-1944), known in the US as the world's greatest child prodigy, who started logic at two, entered school at six but stayed only six months, by which time he had completed all seven grades, and gained a place at Harvard at nine, although he was not allowed to start until he was 11. He graduated at 16 but was never able to hold down an academic job or develop stable relationships, and did little of note.

Burn out, however, appears to be very much the exception rather than the rule. In chess, for example, where the ELO system provides an objective assessment of ability, only one of the 11 most outstanding children of the past failed to become a top-rank grandmaster—and even the odd boy out managed to achieve moderate GM status. Exceptional children, it seems, go on to become exceptional adults, a pattern confirmed by studies such as that begun by Lewis Terman in 1921 in California, which followed the lives of 650 very able children. Terman also slayed the myth of the "weedy swot". On the contrary, the brightest children were also the healthiest, strongest, best adjusted and most sociable. Sorry weeds.

Not all exceptional adults were exceptional children—which is some compensation—but the very existence of child prodigies might suggest that nature may be responsible for more of their abilities than nurture. Radford, for one, thinks this is a false dichotomy. "Ability isn't something you have, it's something you develop. There's no ability without achievement. It's also a myth that true genius is somehow born, not made, and will emerge despite lack of encouragement. The histories of child prodigies clearly show the vital importance of teachers."

Recent mathematical prodigies like Ruth Lawrence and Ganesh Sittapalam, both of whom gained first-class degrees in their early teens, were taught by their fathers. The three Polgar sisters, the youngest of whom, Judith, is, for her age, the best chess player ever, were also trained from a very early age by their father Lazlo. He is on record as saying he thinks that their innate ability is not exceptional. The same factor also emerged in the study made by the American researcher Caroline Cox of the most exceptional persons of the past 250 years. Of her top 20, 14 showed very strong parental influence and nine had a very intensive early education.

So where does that leave us? One conclusion must be sadness at immense waste. How many Mozarts or Mills have gone unrecognised because their abilities were not encouraged? The second, and, for egalitarians, more uncomfortable, message is that perhaps gifted children are every bit as much in need of help and encouragement as the less able. Maybe we need to turn our attention to growing geniuses.

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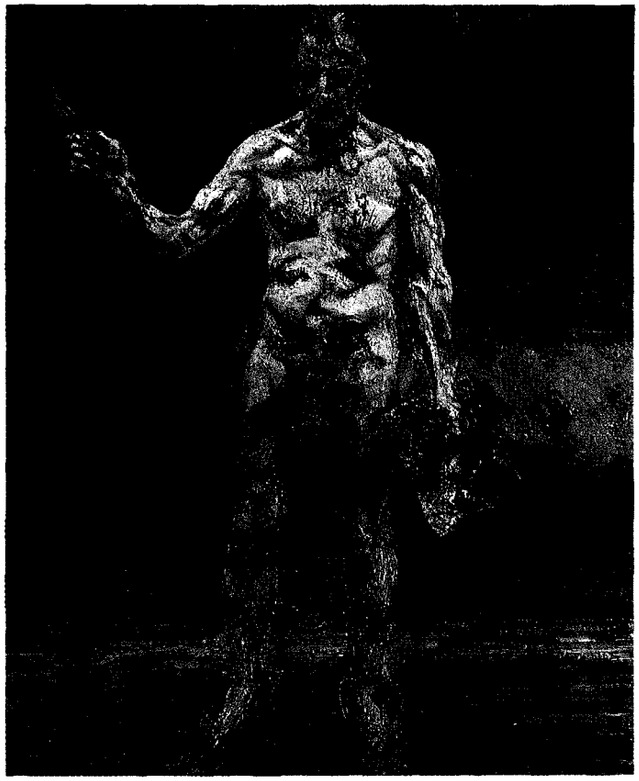

Left: "Painter Working, Reflection" (1993); right: "Two Men" (1987-88)

Lucian Freud's commitment to the soul beneath the skin has survived time and fashion. But the artist is now a partner, not a predator, argues **Sue Hubbard**

The way of all flesh

"It looks more like the National Gallery. I can't understand why this is at the Whitechapel. He is simply not a contemporary painter." "It's such a brave exhibition. Nobody paints seriously anymore. Look at the scale. They look like Rubens."

Both of these contradictory remarks at the private view of Lucian Freud's new exhibition, one from a young artist and the other made to me by Paula Rego, show that this obsessional artist is as provocative as ever. Through the shifting sands of fashion—whether Richard Hamilton's Pop in the 1960s, Carl André's Minimalist bricks and Damien Hurst's egotistical flirtations with *gravitas*—Freud has gone on painting, mainly from the human figure.

Although London has been his home for much of his life, he was, of course, born in Berlin in 1922: grandson of Sigmund and a member of that talented, un-English clan that has spawned numerous writers and "personalities". He has remained very much the outsider, notorious for his anarchic socialising and Soho drinking with contemporaries such as Francis Bacon, his Don Juanesque love life and his relentless dedication to work. And through all this, the paintings have changed.

Gone are the early Ingres-like surfaces of *Girl with Leaves* or his famous portrait of Bacon. In them, the blue-white skin is stretched translucent and taut across the base bone-structure like a metaphor for angst, or the reflections of the room are caught in the iris of an eye and every lash is painted with painstaking precision. Now, his vision has mellowed.

It is as if the maudlin sadness of the young existentialist, who could only look from a clinical distance at "a patient etherised upon a table", has softened to admit not only his sitters' vulnerability, but his own. To compare his *Naked Girl* of 1966 to his current nudes is to see an artist embracing humanity and tenderness much as Rembrandt did towards the end of his life.

For "reality" as photographic likeness does not interest Freud. For this reason, it is wrong to lump him with other English painters. He has never been touched with the Slade obsession with putting things in the right place, which emanated from William Coldstream and was passed down through the likes of Euan Uglow. Nor should he be linked, despite the superficial similarities of his early work, with Stanley Spencer, whose fey Blakeian vision of heaven is in complete contrast to the "psychoanalytic" truth sought by Freud.

What concerns Freud is essence: to penetrate beneath the surface, to touch (in his grandfather's terminology) the id and the ego of his subject. "I would wish", he has said, "my portraits to be *of* people, not *like* them." He has been criticised for being "too male"; the artist who sucks his model dry to serve his own ends. But this is to miss the point of his newer work. In these paintings, there is a complicity between artist and sitter—a new equality.

He has said he wants the paint to "work as flesh". Yet analogies with meat, made by some critics, are misleading. That was Bacon's forte. Whereas Bacon created great archetypes for the 20th century, screaming Popes and faceless victims anguished at the base of the cross—a "theatre" of Euripidean proportion—Freud's work concerns itself with the individual and faces up without evasion to what it means to be human and mortal.

One of the catalysts for change was his meeting at Anthony D'Offay's with the chubby, outrageously camp performance artist, Leigh Bowery, who has a penchant for sequined masks and furry velcroed female

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pudenda. Since then, Freud has done numerous paintings of him, including huge full-frontal nudes, a back view reminiscent of Ingres' *Bather of Valpincon*, a close-up genital study and a portrait where the shaved fleshy head lolls forward like that of a sleeping pink baby.

Through his candid, almost tender portraits of Bowery's thick-set body, Freud has subverted the traditional stance of the artist as a voyeur who paints the (usually female) nude. These works are reliant on an interplay between viewer and viewed. Freud is no longer the distant scientist of former years. The flesh here is not thin and pale but doughy and inviting; a landscape of planes, contours and folds. There is volume, a new fullness. At times the paint sags, at other moments it is granular. You can feel the artist going beyond the surface, modelling as a sculptor might in several dimensions.

His figures, particularly his nudes, are presented without the protection of a social background against which they can be defined. Often the only accompaniment is a pile of white rags, their patterning suggesting something visceral or flowing. Water, perhaps? They suggest a moving towards, and away from, something indefinable that cannot quite be named. In *Naked Portrait 1988*, the female model lies in a straight line on the bare floorboards in front of the "waves" of rags, like a beached corpse.

Also startling in their intensity are his portraits of his family and friends. As in much of his other work, the brittleness to be found in the early paintings of his young wife Kitty, daughter of Epstein and Caroline Blackwood, has given way to a greater compassion. More than anywhere, this can be seen in the painting of his mother. Tiny, frail and bird-like, she lies, grey-haired, dressed in white, her hands folded across her midriff like a nun or a virginal bride. The pose echoes the sleeping effigies to be found on medieval tombs in cathedrals.

Freud is now in his seventies. He is beginning to paint against time. In his nude self-portrait, he shows us he is the working artist, literally down to his boots (they are the only thing he wears, untied and flapping open). In his hand, he holds the tools of his trade. Like Luther, he seems to attest that "Here I stand. I can do no other."

"Work," he has said, "is the only way out . . . the future is the next picture." Labels, schools and fashions have never interested him. Modernist, post-modernist, expressionist: all are inadequate pigeonholes. What he, like his contemporary Francis Bacon, demonstrates is that whatever the prevailing mode, whatever the claims about the death of art, there will always be an elemental need to catch the mysteries of humanity in paint. Freud's isolated figures honour tradition while attempting, in a fractured world, to find a connection through art, not only with the deepest recesses of his own psyche but also with "the other".

The exhibition continues at the Whitechapel Art Gallery until 21 November

Philip Hedley demands that the Arts Council stop its slow suicide

Poodle with a death-wish

Many in the arts world fear that the Arts Council of Great Britain—soon to be only of England—is suffering a terminal illness. Recently, 80 directors and administrators of subsidised theatres gathered in shock at the news that the council was proposing to cut completely the grants of ten regional theatres. Despite outbursts of anger at the activities of senior officers, the meeting confirmed its support for the existence of a strong Arts Council, fully independent of the government.

We also wished to support the council in its aim of campaigning to persuade the government not to implement the crippling £5 million cut to the arts that is threatened in the autumn budget. However, our wholehearted support has been made very difficult because the council has decided to impose its own tranche of cuts to music and drama, thus making them seem acceptable.

The threadbare justifications for the cuts and the incompetent proposals for their execution are breathtaking. For example, the idea of submitting three London orchestras to a competition for one grant, the winner to be decided by a Lord Justice, means the Arts Council has declared itself incapable of making artistic judgments.

The council has stated that the drama budget can cope with a 2 per cent cut because drama, as opposed to other arts, already has an infrastructure in place. This, however, does not validate the proposal to make huge holes in that infrastructure by closing ten theatres. Nor did it seem aware of the strength of feeling in such towns as Bristol, Plymouth, Watford and Coventry against the threat to theatres that are an integral part of their local community.

The Arts Council cannot present this cack-handed scheme as part of any national strategy. Many theatres, such as my own at Stratford East, have already been devolved from the council to regional arts boards and so cannot be considered for cuts. The only shred of a national plan is that the money moved from theatres due for devolution next April would stay under Arts Council control and thus help to justify its existence.

The council has been healthily criticised by artists since its inception, of course, but the process by which it has sunk to its current depths in their estimation began with the appointment of William Rees-Mogg as its chair in 1982. He, and the majority of other senior appointments since, were all acceptable answers to Mrs Thatcher's famous question: "Is he one of us?" With its arm's-length principle, the council is meant to be independent of the government. The trick is for the government to appoint poodles. Then there's no problem in throwing away their leashes.

To please its political masters, the council has lost its principles *and* the respect of those it's meant to serve. No amount of expensive consultants' strategies seems to help. Only the resignations of the incumbents could restore respect for the offices of the chair, the secretary-general and the drama director.

It is very doubtful that the council will do the decent thing at its meeting on 22 September and reverse its decision on the London orchestras. It may well heed its drama panel's advice and spread equal misery among all its drama clients, with a 2 per cent cut across the board. This shouldn't be represented as a triumph for the council, nor should it attempt to blame the panel. This year's gratuitous cut is the fault of the drama director, his superiors and the council members. They have already stated that drama will suffer a further 1.6 per cent loss when the government's £5 million cut comes, in terms that do not indicate they are putting up a tough fight.

Will the council's addiction to machine-gunning itself in the feet, combined with backbenchers' rumblings about threatened arts organisations in their constituencies, compel Heritage Secretary Peter Brooke to take action? He may dismantle the Arts Council altogether. After all, next April, it loses many of its direct responsibilities to the regional boards, and is making a poor job of some remaining duties, such as advocacy for the arts. It's rumoured that abolition would please some high-fliers in the new department.

It would be tragic if he took this course just because the Arts Council is temporarily ill-led. He could reform it, and he doesn't need another group of consultants to tell him how. He should make sure that new appointments are of a calibre that will regain the respect of artists and the public. They must be able to stand up for the council's independence.

An enfeebled, kow-towing Arts Council, out of touch with its community, is giving him a great deal of immediate trouble. A strong, representative council can do its prescribed job properly and would give him far less trouble in the long run. He could insist, for instance, that the council is more open and accountable. Why can't regional arts boards, among others, elect their own representatives to it? Why can't the various art form panels elect their own chairs, who would in turn be their representatives on the council proper?

The council of the National Campaign for the Arts is a working model to follow. It consists of elected representatives of trade unions and management associations, and of arts organisations, with co-opted members providing a balance between the art forms. I find them very capable of taking a broad view on behalf of the welfare of all the arts. Indeed, I would urge readers to join the Campaign (071-828 4448) to ensure the arts do have one strong champion to fight their corner.

Philip Hedley is artistic director of the Theatre Royal Stratford East

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White lace with a difference: "Daughters of the Dust"

Jonathan Romney floats through a dreamy vision of the African-American past

A view from the beach

With a big resurgence of the costume drama just around the corner—Jane Campion's *The Piano* and Martin Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence* are only the start—we're going to be seeing a lot of white lace on the screen in the next few years. But we're unlikely to see it arrayed quite as lavishly as it is in Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* (at the ICA Cinema from 17 September).

Dash's film may be costume drama, but it harks back to a tradition radically different from the world of Merchant-Ivory. It reverses the trend by which historical impedimenta have come to signify word-heavy moral drama that's merely been "dressed up": relegated to a mannered, distant past. *Daughters of the Dust* is very literally an African-American film. Set at the turn of the century, it concerns the Gullah people—descendants of Africans brought to America as slaves, and living on the islands off the coast of Carolina. They belong on one hand to modern America (for which one family is about to depart) and on the other to Africa, whose customs and memories form part of their daily life.

The film's sense of delicacy comes from the awareness that what we're seeing is just about to blow away, like the dust that trickles through hands in a repeated shot. These are apparently the community's final moments, as two daughters of the Peazant family return for what must surely be a farewell visit. A sense of stability comes in the glowering eye of grandmother Nana (Cora Lee Day), keeper of the old religious belief, who weaves everyday objects into little talismans, divine time capsules.

The film is less about characters than about figures in a landscape. It is extremely beautiful: that is, it chooses to highlight beauty (of clothes, faces, landscape) as part of its language. Dash is reclaiming a visual pleasure that's usually held to be alien both to political cinema in general and to black American cinema in particular—which, it's often assumed, has to deal exclusively in urban realism. This is undeniably political cinema; an exercise in cutural archaeology, dealing with a rarely reported part of black history. There's a degree of realistic reportage of the minutiae of community life: from cooking to a flashback of an older memory, the preparation of indigo by slaves that stains their hands indelibly blue.

But the film is also determinedly non-realistic. It's no accident that much of the action takes place on the beach. The community is shown as if at an extended farewell picnic. The various encounters and digressions take place as if on a stage set, individual dramas being subsumed into one chorus-like sense of community.

Time itself is unreal. The Gullah live their lives between the past and a future represented by an Unborn Child, who skips through the film as a wilful thread of unreality, and around whom Dash bases some of her mischievous coups. The daughter drifts elusively in and out of the action in slow-motion, or runs shimmering along a sunlit beach. The temporal play gets a neat twist, as Dash applies to this harbinger of the future all the tricks cinema usually reserves for ghosts.

Eloquent as the film is, it doesn't want to communicate too directly. Much of the dialogue is either too strangely accented (in the Gullah dialect) or too poetically allusive for its import to be obvious. And there are too many characters, with too many relations between them for us to have any one thread to latch on to. This is an effect of the film's concern with plurality. Even on the island, there are many Africas, with different beliefs, holding sway beside Nana's.

Above all, Dash has chosen to turn her back on the linear structures of western narrative and to spin a fiction that owes its form to the oral narratives of African griots. How this works isn't immediately apparent; what is apparent is a tension between the film's dream-like feel and its self-conscious theatrical quality. The film is most effective when we feel that we're watching scenes from an imagined past acted out in the present. That makes it all the more powerful when the sense of an autonomous past does break through. But the lucidity of that design is sometimes kept at bay by the film's more mystical overtones, and it would be very easy to come away with the same uncritical assent you feel on waking up from a bewitching but impenetrable dream.

Betty Caplan finds that silences can still say more than stage hysteria

Twilight of the idols

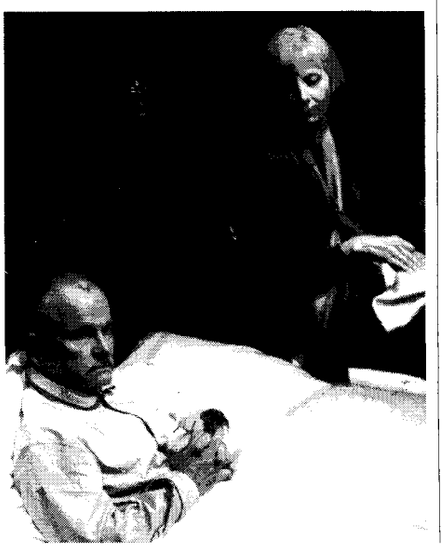
The cry from Glasgow to Greenwich is "Give us something *theatrical*!" But what does that mean? Two plays in London offer very different answers.

Terry Johnson's *Hysteria,* in an exuberant production by Phyllida Lloyd, employs every effect in the book. Sigmund Freud (Henry Goodman), an exile in the last year of his life, is plagued in his Hampstead study by a succession of visitors. There's Abraham Yahuda (David de Keyser), who urges him not to publish *Moses and Monotheism* (in which he is about to assert that Moses was not the fabled babe in the bullrushes but an Egyptian aristocrat); the galloping, moustachioed Salvador Dali (Tim Potter) and the relentless Jessica (Phoebe Nicholls), daughter of one of Freud's apparent success stories.

Psychoanalysis seems to have broken open the sore of abuse that her mother harboured. She was enabled to have a child and lead a "normal" life. What Freud doesn't know is that she committed suicide in an asylum several years later.

The play deals with now well-worn thesis of Jeffrey Masson: that Freud suppressed his theory of childhood seduction because it was simply too explosive, and relegated it to the arena of pure fantasy. How Dali fits in I still haven't worked out, but he obviously gave Johnson plenty of scope for improvisation. The slapstick and farce come thick and fast; the embarrassing Jessica has to be secreted

Bed springs eternal: Ian Holm and Anna Massey in Pinter's "Moonlight"



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naked in a closet, providing plenty of knickers jokes, and the weary old man is caught in a compromising position with a prostrate Dali.

In the climactic scene when the nightmare gathers pace, the clock on the wall melts, the room begins to close in, corpses appear from the undergrowth and chaos descends. The guilty imaginings of a fevered brain? Who knows. At any rate, Freud is diminished by his apparent cowardice: in deleting the words that implicated his own grandfather as a pederast and in bowing to Yahuda, he is seen to be taking the easy option.

Theatrical it certainly is, if by that you mean sheer effects. But the schoolboy humour sits uneasily astride the real pain of Jessica's trauma and Freud's own miserable state, in agony from the jaw cancer that was to kill him, and distraught by the flight from Vienna. Do we long to have our idols smashed? Mozart a farting, foul-mouthed jerk, Freud a shambling coward? Or has Johnson opted for special effects at the expense of dramatic honesty?

Harold Pinter's *Moonlight*, on the other hand, displays his usual brand of theatricality in the form of sheer verbal wizardry. Andy (Ian Holm) lies dying as his wife Bel (Anna Massey) nonchalantly embroiders. Other characters drift in and out: two young men who may or may not be sons (Douglas Hodge and Michael Sheen), a softly spoken young woman (Claire Skinner) who could be their daughter, and two relics of the past (Jill Johnson and Edward de Souza). There's no dry ice. No naked bodies. No harsh music. Just plain old-fashioned words.

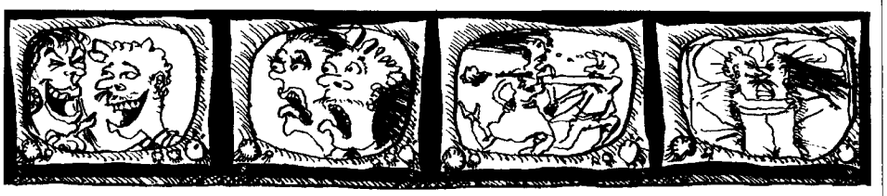
But then Pinter's words never have been that plain. And the drama lies in the spaces, the silences, the crevices between the rocks. Each character lives in his or her own world. The interest lies in the clash between their conflicting versions. Jill Johnson's Maria arrives with her prepared agenda about her own family: could she be the one both Andy and Bel once languished for?

"I don't remember the past," declares Andy, raging in Berkoffian fury from his bed. But that's because there is nothing but the past as the minutes tick away. "Am I dying?" he asks Bel. "If you were dying, you'd be dead," she answers crisply, with the kind of logic that Pinter's characters revel in. She bites back the tears at the cussedness of her boys. "It doesn't matter," she says when they fail to arrive, meaning exactly the opposite.

In a succession of short scenes, each comments on the other. Nothing is spelt out, nothing explicit. David Leveaux's production and Bob Crowley's muted set create the moonlight world the play so subtly evokes. Invisible curtains separate the characters from one another. Their nocturnal wanderings are a metaphor for our own failure to connect. Great theatre, yet there's nothing but words. It looks as if the old curmudgon hasn't lost his touch after all.

"Hysteria" is at the Royal Court Theatre; "Moonlight" is at the Almeida Theatre to 30 October

JACI STEPHEN



He's lived a life that's full, he's travelled each and every highway. So why inflict it on us for 280 minutes?

Films based on the lives of singers and composers generally make good viewing. But when the subject is as self-absorbed, selfish and personally unappealing as Frank Sinatra, the result is a tedious 280 minutes in the valley of the shadow of death.

Sinatra, the "authorised" mini-series (Sunday, Monday, ITV) was produced by the singer's daughter, Tina, and starred Philip Casnoff in the title role. It painted a picture of a man who put his own needs and career before his family and friends; a man intent on achieving his life's ambition to become a star at any cost. If this is how Sinatra sees himself, pity help him when the unauthorised mob are let loose on his life.

According to this film, until he made it big, Sinatra spent his time in a dental technician's outfit, acting the smart-arse among people he believed to be less talented than himself. Everyone around him also seemed to be called Frank, but maybe that was just an extension of his egotistical imagination.

The original recordings, extremely well mimed by Casnoff, were the highlight in a script forever trying to keep rigor mortis at bay. From his humble beginnings in Hoboken, New Jersey, to the peak of his career at Madison Square Garden in 1974, Sinatra filled his life with drink, women and song. It is the stuff of which mini- series are made, but here the result was one tedious tale of a man whose brain never managed to match the depth of his voice.

The women in the singer's life were a long-suffering bunch, from Sinatra's first wife, Nancy (Gina Gershon) to Ava Gardner (Marcia Gay Harden) and Mia Farrow (Nina Siemaszko). Nancy, when she wasn't giving birth, was glued to the telephone telling Frank how much she loved him and begging that he be there for whichever birth happened to be next. Like a mobster's moll, she spent her life burying her head in the sand, hoping that the latest shady sexual adventure was just a passing phase.

But she was unlucky. The only time her husband's flies seemed to be zipped was when he was singing in front of 300 people—and not always then, you suspected.

"You're so busy grabbing onto the next moment, you don't have any time for the moment now," whined Nancy. In fact, he was so busy grabbing Ava's breasts, he didn't have time for any moment.

On the visual evidence presented here, Ava's breasts were something of a mystery. Indeed, how Frank ever came out from any contact with them in one piece is a miracle of science. It's hard to believe that anyone could still be breathing after several trips down a cleavage that had its own ski-lift. "Oh, God, Frank, you don't know when to stop!", cried Ava, during one passionate encounter. On those slopes, it was a case of not knowing *how*.

"We're just causing pain to everybody, most of all ourselves," Ava whispered, as the relationship drew to its end. Where viewers were concerned, pain was an understatement. The knowledge that at this point we were some way even from the end of part one (part two lasted for two hours 40 minutes) was enough to bring out the voluntary euthanasiast in the most temperate of souls.

Next came Mia Farrow, who met Sinatra while she was filming *Peyton Place*. The couple sat in front of the proverbial log fire and Mia was . . . well, Mia.

Not even a waif; more like half a waif: this was the woman who has made a verb from the word waif. She waifed around Sinatra's life just like she waifed around André Previn's and Woody Allen's, before he had the good sense to trade her in for her stepdaughter.

Curiously, Sinatra's appearance didn't change in the 50 years covered here; he only grew more violent and unpleasant. At one point, he even tried to gas himself, the success of which would at least have brought a merciful end to these proceedings.

Sinatra's voice was the one redeeming feature in the film. It seems to have been the only redeeming feature in his life, too. Looking back at his failed relationships, he finally asked his father: "How d'you last so long with ma?" The answer was the best line in the film. "I don' talk and' I don' listen."

Professionally, Sinatra's appeal and success were indisputable. He didn't have a particularly powerful voice, but he had a style that captured the spirit of an age—albeit along with the hearts of some highly suspect mobsters, but captured it nonetheless. In his youth, girls in bobby socks and pony tails screamed their love, and at the time of the Madison Square Garden concert of 1974, he seemed as popular as ever.

We also remembered in this film that Frank had once been a popular and successful actor. He even won an Oscar for *From Here to Eternity*. And by the end of Monday night, you could have been in no doubt as to how long eternity really is.

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The not-so-thin blue line: disturbances in Handsworth, 1985, from "Vanley Burke: a retrospective" (Lawrence & Wishart, £14.99)

Rotten apples –or rotten barrel?

BENT COPPERS: A SURVEY OF POLICE CORRUPTION
James Morton
Little, Brown, £15.99
COMING OUT OF THE BLUE
Marc E Burke
Cassell, £11.95 paperback/£34.95 hardback

Phil Scraton

Police opposition to the Sheehy Report has produced rare unity and returned policing to the head of the political agenda. With established conditions under threat and the controversy over performance-related pay, the uneasy relationship between the police as a force and as a service, between law enforcement and community care, is making headlines. Collective anger is directed at the Home Secretary, with unity generated by a feeling of being "under siege". Two new books look inside policing and show that this unity is tenuous.

James Morton's style is engaging and he tells a good tale. Academic historians will baulk at his generalisation of periods from celebrated cases, and he does concentrate on policing London at the expense of the regional forces. But he sharply observes the origins of the CID, which eventually became a firm within a firm, in terms of its "internecine warfare" and creeping corrupt practices.

By the 1930s, corruption was deeply institutionalised, featured in successive Royal Commissions, but seemingly unstoppable. Deals at all levels, including a kind of "private policing", proliferated between officers and the communities in which they operated. His recent history covers familiar ground—Challenor, Confait, Scotland Yard, Stalker, West Midlands—but, curiously, others are absent. They include the Special Patrol Group's involvement in the death of Blair Peach, the systematic punishment of Black and Irish communities, the appalling practices of intimidation and fitting-up during the 1984-85 coal dispute and the cynical misuse of community policing.

By far the most significant chapters deal with the distinction between being "bent for self" and being "bent for the job". The former is occupied by a collection of "moochers", "chisellers", "favourers", "shoppers", "extortionists", "bribe-takers" and "perjurers". Their corruption undoubtedly influences the course of justice, as bribes are used to negotiate prosecution, protection money is paid to stop raids, money goes missing and confiscated drugs are resold. Whether it be in "shakedowns" or the suppression of evidence, this group of officers uses privileged access to benefit from illegal practices.

Those "bent for the job" are the zealots who promise favours, pay cash, threaten intimidation and fabricate evidence in order to secure convictions. This is the site of grassing where confessions are extracted, suspects are "plastic bagged" (allegedly), evidence is planted and scripts are rewritten. The objective is to win convictions by directing justice through short cuts. These officers believe that the "balance" of the law needs redressing away from the "villains", that clear-up rates need to be improved and that their higher moral ends justify unorthodox means—thus creating a new orthodoxy.

Addressing the "extreme volatility of public opinion", the book shows that there has never been universal acceptance of policing methods. It questions why "the police have not been able to keep their triumphs in the public eye as long as their detractors have managed to do with their faults". Possibly the answer lies in Morton's discussion of the "harassment, brutality, incivility and abuse of power" by the police towards "inferior groups—scrotes, pigs, scumbags, toe-rags".

Rather than focus on the resistance from Black and Irish communities, gays and lesbians, women survivors of male violence and rape, his analysis tails off into the impact of negative images of the police in books, film and TV series. For these provide the means through which the public is "trained . . . into accepting financial corruption and brutality as part of the necessities of police life". It is a predictable argument: an overworked, under-resourced police pursued by a hostile and unforgiving media whose "realism" diminishes public expectations of police work. But the lesson of the past 25 years is that public perception of the police has been constructed around experiences, direct and indirect. Through them, people have come to learn that the police cannot be trusted.

Morton notes that the "spectre of gay sex amongst police officers has reared its loving head". Inappropriately, but typically, his comment is put in the context of late-night visits to brothels and sex as "an opportunity for excitement outside the . . . humdrum working routines". Marc Burke's book is a moving reminder of what it feels like to be defined as a spectre. These personal accounts by gay and lesbian officers illustrate the pain of living with a dual identity in a homophobic work environment. It is a book about the politics of identity—often a politics of denial—that begins with recruitment and training, and moves into associations with straight officers in work and social situations.

Primary identities, as police officer and gay, are negotiated as "a form of dual citizenship". The accounts deal with personal relationships and the strain imposed by the job—especially the fear of disclosure—but the issue of "double lives" remains focal.

Yet for those officers who took the courageous decision to come out, there is a deep sense of relief. As one woman detective sergeant states: "The fear [of coming out] is usually worse than the reality." Burke states that: "Coming out can kill off much of that oppression by actively changing assumptions and expectations." Disclosure also validates personal relationships. It affirms identity and "challenges popular prejudices". But what of the hidden offensive and discriminatory behaviour, the inhibitions on promotion?

Experiences range from graffiti, intimid-

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ation and beatings to "institutional prejudice". And there are serious casualties on the way. An ex-officer's account of life-threatening violence and witch-hunts in the RUC shows how far individuals and institutions will go to drive out gays.

There are comparisons from abroad and discussions of the move in some forces to deal with sexual orientation within the framework of equal opportunities. It is all well and good to establish policy statements and for chief officers to voice the correct rhetoric, but positive application is what counts. Can the spite and venom of the canteen culture be tackled? Certainly, the Lesbian and Gay Police Association has been direct in its politics. Formed in 1990, it caught the establishment off-guard and is now a strong pressure group. So what of institutional change? Burke approached every police representative body and offered them a free platform, but he was refused or ignored. That hardly inspires optimism.

Both books deal with institutional processes: with the significance of occupational culture as a mediator of policies and practices. Each questions the legitimacy conferred by senior ranks on discriminatory and/or illegal behaviour. They consider structural relations, rather than simply attitudes, preferences or prejudices. And they expose systematic and deep-seated problems that permeate the entire process of policing.

Are we to accept that corruption is inevitable, that unlawful practices are essential to effective police work? Or that homophobic and misogynist action, equally endemic, is simply part of "normal" male bonding? The false unity on the outside disguises the struggles within.

Phil Scraton is professor of criminology and director of the Centre for Studies in Crime and Social Justice at Edge Hill University College

Fool around

FIMA
Amos Oz, translated by Nicholas de Lange
Chatto & Windus, £15.99

Stephen Brook

In Amos Oz's previous novel, *To Know a Woman*, the protagonist Yoel struggles to communicate with those around him. He lives surrounded by women yet his experience confirms their unknowability. *Fima* also depicts an individual, but Fima is an Israeli of a different kind. Whereas Yoel is a retired Mossad agent, a man of action trying to regain connection with family and surroundings, the 54-year-old Fima lives a life of indolence and dependence. Yoel displays an excess of detachment, while Fima is a warm-hearted leech, exhausting those with whom he is in contact.

Argumentative and garrulous, Fima thinks nothing of impulsively phoning his friends in the middle of the night to pursue a debate. Like most Israelis, he worries incessantly about how to attain peace in the Middle East; he devours newspapers and news bulletins, engages taxi drivers in virulent debate, bores and enrages his friends and conducts imaginary cabinet meetings in his head. His monologues slide effortlessly from the sublime to the ridiculous within the same sentence.

Fima's sole published work is a flimsy and forgotten volume of poems; he earns his living as a receptionist in a clinic. He is helpless, inept, dizzyingly neurotic. Absent-minded and living in squalor, he fantasises that he can move in with his friends, exchanging their company for his (non-existent) domestic skills. "The only reason I'm depressed," he tells his friend Levi, "is because the rest of you don't seem to be nearly depressed enough, considering what's going on."

Although passionately engaged with the world around him, he is, as a man of action, a non-starter, a fantasist. Loyal to his old friends, he also preys on them, using charm and impulse as his principal currency. Back in 1965, Fima's wife Yael, in the act of leaving him, wrote him a definitive appraisal of his monstrous egoism and insensitivity, every word of which rings true. But such is Fima's monstrous egoism and insensitivity that, on her return to Israel with an American husband and a disturbed young son, he wriggles back into her life and sets himself up as a surrogate father to the little boy.

His sex life consists of servicing, potency permitting, deserted wives. This gives him plenty of space in which to exercise his generous capacity for guilt and even greater gift for rationalisation. Mind and body are inextricably bound together, the one always providing excuses for the inadequacies of the other: "He felt furious with his body, always bothering him with its endless needs, and preventing him from carrying through a single thought or observation."

Oz invents his anti-hero brilliantly, with unusually rich and vivid writing after the sobriety of *To Know a Woman*. But he is so engrossed behind his easel, splashing on his exuberant colours, that he has neglected to give his novel sufficient narrative drive. Only at the end, after the death of his suave successful father, does Fima begin a transformation, exhibiting tentative signs of a new confidence as he, the arch-slob and incompetent, prepares to inhabit the orderly business-like world his father had created.

If there is honourable striving in Fima's compulsive and passionate intellectual fertility, there is no comfort for readers who expect Israeli intellectuals to have brawn as well as brains, to be effective and not merely well-intentioned. The buffoon Fima is an antidote to the Israeli stereotype, an essentially comic character, as subversive of contemporary complacencies as only the best comic creations can be.

Stephen Brook's latest book is "Claws of the Crab: Georgia and Armenia in crisis"

The quick and the read

THE CONVERT CARDINALS: NEWMAN AND MANNING
David Newsome
John Murray, £25

Peter Stanford

History tends to remember thinkers rather more than doers, the Marys not the Marthas. The intellectuals leave books and writings as an enduring record of mental pilgrimages, to be picked over by future generations, while one person's practical efforts to improve their neighbours' lot usually leave no more lasting impression than a hand in a bucket of water. That, at least, is the lesson David Newsome draws from the stories of Cardinals Newman and Manning, two eminent Victorians who abandoned the Church of England to take the Pope's shilling.

It was Henry Manning who was never out of the public eye in his lifetime. He led the Catholic Church in England between 1865 and 1892, founded schools, shocked the Prince of Wales with his radical plans when they sat together on a Royal Commission on Housing, and became the darling of the fledgling trade union movement when his intervention brought an end to the London dock strike of 1889.

At the time of his death, crowds lined the streets to express a public grief not seen since the funeral of the Duke of Wellington in 1852. Yet less than 100 years later, Manning is largely forgotten. He has left no monument and no bibliography.

Newman, by contrast, though eclipsed and on occasion pitied by Manning in his lifetime, has become one of the most enduring figures in the history of 19th-century Britain. After his high-profile abandonment in 1845 of Anglicanism and the Oxford Movement he had founded as a way of saving the soul of the Church of England, Newman buried himself in Birmingham for almost half a century. He devoted his life to studying and writing on theological matters. A difficult, irritable, unforgiving man, he commanded respect but seldom affection.

He told his friends that it was his intention to "sink and disappear", but his books, essays, articles and letters provided the key to life after death. Throughout the 20th century, they continued to attract disciples and are credited with foreshadowing—and to an extent inspiring—moves to modernise the Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.

Newman, with his oft-quoted promise to drink a toast first to conscience and then to the Pope, has become the hero of liberal Catholics today who baulk at the authoritarianism of John Paul II. The centenary of his death in 1990 brought a flood of biographies, memorial lectures, and even

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steps to have him canonised.

David Newsome's particular spin on the over-familiar Newman legend is to link it to the sadly neglected achievements of Manning, and so create a central dramatic tension in this dual biography. The two cardinals sit as if at either end of the see-saw. When one is ascending heavenwards on a cloud of virtue, the other is cast down into darkness as the mean-spirited and envious villain.

In this revolving scenario, the fall guy is at one point Manning, whose ambition and lust for power led him to persecute Newman and leave him without influence. Then, as the book progresses, the posthumous lionising of Newman is blamed for overshadowing Manning, denying him his eternal rewards as one of the most skilful and popular church politicians ever seen in these isles.

Newsome maintains this balancing act throughout, leaving the reader unsure as to where his true sympathies lie. The book has the feel of a "compare and contrast" essay. It is dominated by the intricacies of the theological debates in which both men played a leading role.

There was apparently no space for a sustained attempt to place them in their political and social context. The result is that Newman—who dedicated his life to ecclesiastical questions shines while Manning—no mean theologian but a social reformer *par excellence*—is not seen in his full glory.

Newsome skips all too briefly over the personal lives of these two princes of the church. Manning was a widower when he became a Catholic. A cardinal who once loved and cherished a wife might be expected to have a more enlightened perspective on Rome's habitual distaste for matters sexual than his lifelong celibate colleagues, but Newsome does not explore this.

Newman never married. The passionate friendships of the all-male Oxford Movement have recently prompted OutRage campaigner Peter Tatchell to make several public attempts to "out" the cardinal. While Tatchell's case is not convincing, the whole area of Newman's sexual orientation is surely worthy of at least brief discussion; and it is, indeed, one of the few questions that is not adequately tackled in the many biographies of him.

Such gripes to one side, Newsome—who won the Whitbread biography prize for his life of the diarist A C Benson—is an elegant writer with a feel for the Victorian age. *The Convert Cardinals* stands head and shoulders above many of the recent worthy lives of Newman, and has recruited at least one new admirer to the Manning fan club.

Peter Stanford edited the "Catholic Herald" and is author of "Cardinal Hume and The Changing Face of English Catholicism" (Geoffrey Chapman)

Kindest cuts

THE GREEN KNIGHT
Iris Murdoch
Chatto & Windus, £15.99

Kathryn Hughes

An academic tries to murder his brother and ends up apparently slaughtering an unlucky passer-by. But this is not Inspector Morse territory. There are no medieval quads, dotty old Deans and cultured coppers. This is a metaphysical mystery, a multi-layered investigation into the nature of faith, the relationship between magic and religion and above all, the aching, desperate need to believe in a personal God.

Lucas Graffe, a distinguished academic historian, conceives the need to kill his brother Clement on the utterly reasonable grounds that his mother preferred her natural son to the adopted Lucas. Just as he is about to strike the fatal blow, an unknown passer-by intervenes and takes the full force, falling to the ground apparently dead.

The Green Knight of the title refers to Sir Gawain's mighty opponent who, according to the 14th-century narrative poem, appeared at the court of King Arthur and his knights, challenging one of them to cut off his head

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after promising a return match a year hence. Gawain takes up the challenge, cuts off the knight's head and, at the duly appointed time, sets off for the Green Knight's kingdom. He is rewarded with, not the expected decapitation, but the merest of superficial wounds.

The Green Knight of Murdoch's novel is Peter Mir, the man accidentally slain by Lucas Graffe. Except that the mysterious Mir turns out not to have died and, some months later, reappears demanding justice in the form of a re-match with Graffe. True to his literary namesake, he simply nicks Lucas instead of slaughtering him. Unlike the original knight, however, he wants something more: an introduction into Graffe's "family"—an untidy string of acquaintances in London whose main linchpin is the widow Louise Anderson and her three fey teenage daughters.

Murdoch's narrative is delicately poised on the cusp of realism and something altogether stranger. Thus the setting of the story is as sharp as the *A to Z*: an autumnal Brooke Green with occasional excursions to Fulham and Camden Town. But the characters live in a suspended point in history that feels like the 1960s or even earlier. What contemporary teenage girl, for instance, has "tweed travelling clothes"? People speak, as always in Murdoch's world, with an opaque allusiveness that at first seems strange and soon becomes beguiling. Their cleverness never ceases to terrify. Nonetheless, characters who initially appear to have been sketched in simply to serve a plot gradually unfold to become complex, mysterious and solid.

What disciplines the *Green Knight* over its 500 dense pages is a thoroughly good suspense plot. Who is Peter Mir? Is he alive or dead? In the end, the self-proclaimed psychoanalyst turns out to be a rich butcher who has legged it out of the asylum. However, before he is recaptured and eventually dies Mir shakes up every one of Graffe's "family", unlocking the spell that has frozen them for the past ten years and allowing them to move into more satisfying alliances.

Open boxes

THE GINGERBREAD RACE: A LIFE IN THE CLOSING WORLD ONCE CALLED FREE
Andrei Navrozov
Picador, £17.99

Robert Shannan Peckham

It is clearly a sense of the extraordinariness of his own life that has prompted Andrei Navrozov to write his autobiography in his thirties. A self-proclaimed dissident and freethinker, Navrozov is the son of a distinguished Russian émigré. He spent his early childhood rubbing shoulders with the rich and famous in the exclusive enclave of Vnukovo, outside Moscow. After his family moved to New York in 1972, "looking for the excitement of public dissent", the author won a scholarship to Yale: largely, as he acknowledges, on account of his unusual biography.

Yes, it's yet another toppled statue of Lenin from yet another journalist's trip through post-communist chaos. This one stood in Yerevan, capital of Armenia, and appears in Tiziano Terzani's tour of ungovernable central Asia after the deluge, "Goodnight, Mister Lenin" (Picador, £15.99)

For Navrozov, who was weaned by his father on the writings of John Stuart Mill and George Orwell, culture is born of antagonism and iconoclasm. "Dissent is culture and culture is salvation," he remarks, somewhat abstrusely. Throughout, Navrozov rails like a latter-day Tom Sawyer against society's subjugation into enclaves at the hands of power.

After a childhood spent reading Xenophon in opulent seclusion followed by student days in the cloistered gothicism of Yale, Navrozov is certainly qualified to talk about the dangers of circumscribed existences. At the same time, he repudiates what he condemns as the platitudinous myths of democratic America, the pressure of conformity and the complacency of American liberalism. As he surveys the sweep of world history through his own family biography, he sees a receding horizon of enclaves, stretching forth into infinity like the Russian steppe.

There is much in Navrozov's post-mortem of his American experiences with which one can agree, and an honesty in his realisation that: "No freethinker can for ever sustain his mistrust of received ideas or images with the full intensity of that brand of paranoia which Mill called the malady of thought."

Whether or not it is true that some are born great and some have greatness thrust upon them, Navrozov certainly believes that as a "hereditary dissident", he sprang forth fully-clothed in the Mill-Orwell mantle. Even if one sympathises with him in the controversy that surrounded the editorial control of the *Yale Literary Magazine*, every page suggests that Navrozov himself thrives on the sensationalism he deplores. One has only to note, for example, the "Talmudic zeal" with which he scans the newspapers, including the *New York Times*, for reference to his own name.

Although he cites with approval Orwell's stricture against W H Auden as "a person to whom murder is at most a word", Navrozov reveals an academic preoccupation with semantics. He traces the etymology of words with the fervour of one of Smollett's waggish pedagogues. There are times when the prose sags under the weight of erudition and the author comes across with the smugness of a model student. Ironically, for an admirer of Philip Larkin, Navrozov upbraids academic lectures at Yale, which he found as insipid as a "conversation with a librarian".

Despite these shortcomings, Navrozov is surely right in arguing for diversity and exposing the pervasiveness of enclaves, whether in academia, religion or politics. He identifies this tendency to enclave-building with the resurgence of an encyclopedic mentality that puts experience into compartments. In the end, however, perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of *The Gingerbread Race* is its numerous anecdotes: from details of Pasternak's septic tank to the apocryphal demise of a dog in Columbus, Ohio. It was crushed to death when the voluminous *New York Times* was delivered through the letterbox.

Mine shafts

BIRDSONG
Sebastian Faulks
Hutchinson, £14.99

Robert Carver

Stephen Wraysford, a youthful, moody Englishman, falls passionately in love with a young married Frenchwoman, Isabelle Azaire, in pre-first world war Normandy. He takes her to live in Provence where he works as a carpenter's mate.

From 1915 to 1919 Stephen fights the Germans in Flanders with savage intensity, often underground with the sappers as they dig and mine the enemy. Isabelle, meanwhile, meets a German soldier, Max, falls in love with him and goes to live in Germany. In 1978, Wraysford's granddaughter, Elizabeth Benson, discovers Stephen's coded diaries and tries to trace what happened to her ancestor.

Ambitious, minutely observed, recounted in plain naturalistic prose, *Birdsong* attempts a great deal, in marked contrast to the vogue for tricksy, author-obsessed English novels. Part *Bildungsroman*, part historical reconstruction, part romantic novel, the book stems from a blend of influences: Flaubert, Zola and Maupassant, Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* and the first-war novels of Richard Aldington and Ford Madox Ford. Meticulous research is in evidence and, at 405 pages, this is a clear contender for the autumn fiction heavyweight stakes.

However, the bold attempt unfortunately doesn't come off. Perhaps the hardest novels for a reviewer to deal with justly are those he or she wants to succeed, but which don't. I

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admired much in this book and kept hoping it would gel.

There is some outstanding writing in the minutely imagined and graphically described underground fighting between German and British sappers deep below the trenches. Jack Firebrace, the doughty ex-miner, is a memorable creation. If this section had been lifted wholesale and carefully edited, with the Normandy and later English sections abandoned, Faulks might have produced a near masterpiece.

As it is, there are three main problems: first, Isabelle Azaire and Elizabeth Benson do not ring true as characters, and in the early pages the panting-gushing sex scenes are way off key for fiction set in this period. Isabelle, meant to be in the mould of Emma Bovary, merely seems like a Mills & Boon heroine, and Elizabeth a *Cosmo* lady.

Second, Faulks' reliance on late-19th century naturalist influences has resulted in pastiche. Modernism in literature grew up, in part, as a result of the inability of 19th-century language to express the horrors of the early 20th. By eschewing all the devices of modernism, Faulks is reduced to a style and psychology inadequate for his needs. Third, and most serious, is a lack of imaginative accuracy in the characterisation and social relations. Sainte-Beuve was correct in stating that Flaubert's error in placing lemon trees in ancient Carthage is far less important than Salammbo's lack of credibility as a woman of barbaric antiquity.

All historical novels are necessarily of the author's own epoch. The trick, as Robert Graves and Mary Renault knew, is seeming to us to get it right. This Faulks fails to do. An example: in 1916, Colonel Barclay invites Wraysford and another British officer to a formal meal in the mess, well behind the front. In a few lines, Faulks commits three gaffes. Colonel Barclay says, "Now let's go and have lunch" (instead of the ubiquitous "luncheon"). Second, Faulks has Wraysford feeling so out of place that "he feels he ought to be waiting on table, rather than sitting there": an accurate democratic cringe now, but wholly alien to an officer and gentleman in 1916.

Last, Colonel Barclay "picks up the bottle of Gevrey-Chambertin and says: 'What's this stuff?'" Wine would have been brought to the table and poured by a mess servant. No officer would have touched it, much less used "stuff" to describe wine.

A good editor should have picked up such solecisms. The absence of irony, nuance and wit throughout the book doesn't help, and when this last is essayed it goes awry. "La France profonde" says an English character deep in the sappers' tunnels, thereby committing another anachronism. The term wasn't in general use until the 1950s.

Birdsong remains an impressive achievement as a new hybrid creation: the literary-blockbuster, Bovary-and-bonking. And it should convert painlessly to the small screen. I have grim premonitions of Ken Russell let loose on it, with a script by Lord Bragg of the Pennine Way. Don't say I didn't warn you.

Night soil

THE LOVE SONGS OF NATHAN J SWIRSKY
Christopher Hope
Macmillan, £13.99

Susan Jeffreys

There's much shifting of soil in this song of the veldt. After dark, unseen men come to Badminton, a suburb of Johannesburg, and with silent black rubber buckets take away the night soil. By day, Errol comes round with a truck full of top soil to sell to the English. Dressed in the remains of their uniforms—from fighting in the desert war "up North"—the fathers strain to turn this soil into rockeries, lawns and English gardens. Heat bakes the earth and fries the flowers, then heavy rains wash the soil away and Errol comes again with his van to sell them the earth, that will never be theirs, all over again.

Into this 1950s suburb drives Nathan J Swirsky to open a chemist's shop. He has a jet black shiny moustache, a motor bike and tales of life beyond Badminton. He makes a window display of aspirins and laxatives and, it being Christmas, builds a nativity scene among the syrup of figs. Nothing much happens in Badminton, so the display draws a small crowd and eventually a brick through the window. "Gus Trupshaw said that people should keep out of other people's religions. Tigers don't mate with bears, do they?"

Set in the time and place of the author's own childhood, the book has the freshness and clarity of a child's vision. We, too, see Nathan J Swirsky not as some portly shopkeeper but as a mysterious and heroic being who sympathises with and understands children.

Nathan marries Ruthie, a beauty from Wimbledon with liberal ideas. She's intent on bringing some of the cosmopolitan glamour of Wimbledon to her new home with a performance of *The Merry Widow*. "My mother shook her head. She really thinks because she's in South Africa she can do as she likes. If she was in Russia Stalin would soon put a stop to that."

The top soil of the book is light and comic, but Hope never lets that cover the violence and racism of this artificial society. A child's hand is swabbed in Dettol because he has shaken hands with an African albino. The Jewish old people's home is rumoured to be built in the shape of the Star of David, part of a secret plan. Blacks and children are casually swatted and beaten. And the English, despite all the planting of sweet peas and watering of lawns, have no substance or root in their surroundings.

Originally written as separate short stories and broadcasts, the novel holds together because of the strength of its themes and the elegance of Hope's writing. The jacket blurb claims the book is hilarious; if I failed to find it so, that is not a criticism. Cruelty, loss and despair run through all the stories. The lightness of Hope's touch does not disguise the darkness of these themes.

PRINTOUT

Private vices

Boyd Tonkin

In one corner of the communications industry, British productivity has led the world since Engels roamed the streets of Manchester. The Economist was founded in 1843 as a platform for fervid young free-traders. Ever since, zealous youths besotted with the market gospel have sprung fully-armed from the magazine's workshop. As privatisation mania spread, the 1980s saw the plant working overtime. You can detect the true Economist faith in plans to balkanise BR; in schemes that force NHS and BBC staff to play shop; in the conversion of UK water resources into a bottomless trough of executive cash. It's a stupendous success story, with one small drawback. Most people affected by these measures welcome them about as much as they would the return of the bubonic plague.

Ruth Dudley Edwards' mammoth company history, "The Pursuit of Reason: The Economist 1843-1993" (Hamish Hamilton, £30), commends the boardroom bible for "thinking the unthinkable". That now means reverse Robin Hoodery: robbing the poor of jobs and services to stuff the pockets of the rich. Edwards is a fine, sceptical historian and a crisp stylist who does her impressive best with 150 years of office politics. But the Economist today is no mere business journal. Far more than the socially aware FT, it sails the world as flagship for a dogma. In these pages, we hardly ever glimpse the victims of full-throttle free trade, drowned in its wake.

For a comprehensive balance-sheet on the flight from public ownership, specialists should refer to "The Political Economy of Privatisation", edited by Thomas Clarke and Christos Pitelis (Routledge, £60). This huge symposium delivers some very mixed messages. Overall, the private sector improves on state control only when regulators intervene early and often. And in the third world, the sale of public enterprises without profound change in "the terms of trade and aid" will repeat "the acute disappointments of central planning".

Non-economists can find a well-written and far-sighted tour of the terrain in Brendan Martin's "In the Public Interest?" (Zed Books, £12.95). He casts a cool eye on the global wreckage left by botched dispersals of public assets. Accepting privatisation as a "scalpel", not a "panacea", he calls for economic forms that will blend "a new mix of state, the market and civil society".

Martin likens "free-market triumphalists" to wild-west quacks. This is too kind. The elixir peddlers merely sold sugar-water. Fanatic privateers can poison whole societies. In Britain, the toxins now strike even before the dose is taken. The new BR timetable (slimmed down prior to the sell-off) will leave passengers shivering on platforms. Not even the wealthiest will want to pass the time in reading gung-ho Economist leaders.

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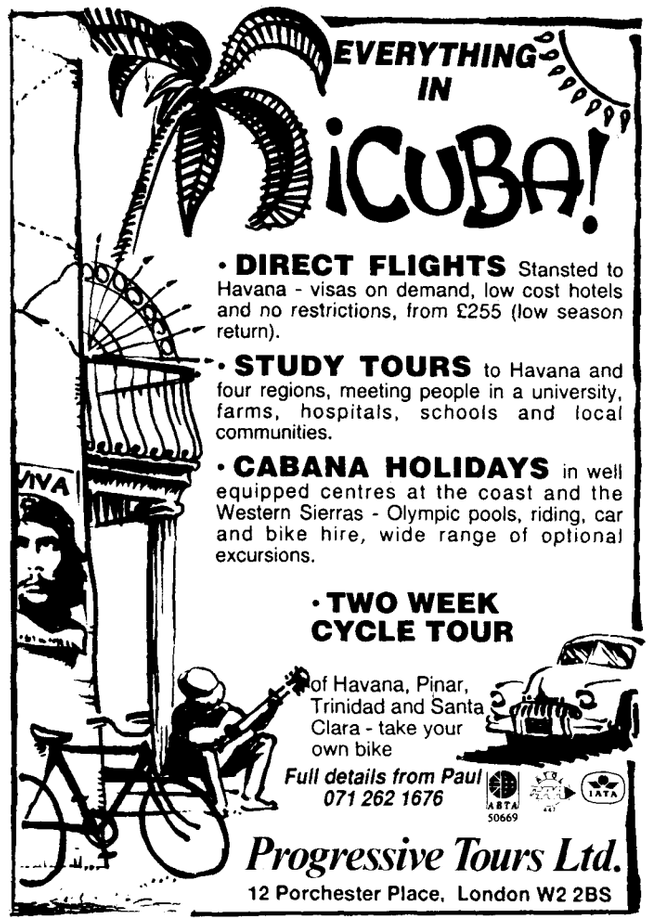
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ENDGAMES: Weekend Competition

No 3294 Set by George Cowley
We asked for bible stories as retold by agnostics.

Report by Ms de Meaner
There were quite a few chatty asides this week, including an apology from a Gil Filbey: "Sorry if this doesn't fit your format." Well spotted, Gil—May I call you Gil?—although I wonder if you noticed how well it works being said aloud to a rap beat. The note ended: "Please remember me to Pat Coyne." With pleasure. Not that this will make any difference, as I'm afraid friendship with our august chief executive doesn't guarantee favour; rather the opposite. However, you will be pleased to know that we are taking up your suggestion about the toilet.

Aside from those who decided "agnostic" really meant "feminist" (God = She), the most popular model for entrants was epitomised by George Cowley's laconic, "And Job turned his face to the wall, and cursed God, and died in agony"—only longer. At least four compers had Daniel going into the lions' den and getting eaten; T J Davies' two women were quite happy for Solomon to cut the child in two; El Basilio's Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego burned to death; and Elijah was torn to bits by two bears in David Heaton's version.

Other favourites were the Walls of Jericho and Moses and the Tablets. Those who sent in the former still had them falling down—but for perfectly proper reasons. Nearly every Moses wrote his own tablets, but I thought George Simmers had the edge. Other than that, the favoured explanations for the goings-on in the bible were: drink, drugs, aliens and conjuring, in that order.

A massive twelve quid to the winners, except for Michael Cregan and Kevin Irving, who only get ten for being a tad obvious.

And when the shepherd had gathered in the sheep, he found that one of them had strayed away and become lost unto the flock.

Immediately he donned his cloak, and set off into the snow, saying, For it is the lost sheep that the Good Shepherd must care for.

And when he found the sheep, lying in a ditch and bleating piteously, he wrapped it in his cloak, held it to the warmth of his breast, and tenderly carried it back unto his dwelling place.

And there he had it in a stew with potatoes, onions, carrots, and peas, saying, Yea truly that was a very tasty piece of mutton.

Michael Cregan

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there; and they ran out of wine.

Jesus saith unto his mother, Have they no beer? Or sherry? Or poteen?

And his mother saith, Hast thou no flask concealed about thy person, for thou dost normally drink like unto a fish, the which is thy symbol.

And Jesus answered, Ssssh, mine hour is not yet come.

And his mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

And Jesus calleth the bridegroom to him, and saith, Have them open first that gift which thy cousin's cousin's aunt hath placed upon the table, only do it in secret.

And the servants opened the gift, and Lo, it was wine.

Now when the ruler of the feast tasted of the wine, he clasped the bridegroom, saying, Thou has first set forth a rhubarby wine, not bad, that thy grandfather hath distilled, but this is The Real Thing.

And Jesus asked the servants, saying, What wine was it?

And they answered and said, It is the Piat D'Or.

And Jesus wept.

Bill Greenwell

In the beginning—well, that's a bad beginning for starters, since there was no beginning.

Once upon a time—no, that won't do, if there was no beginning time doesn't come into it. Try another tack.

The cosmos came into being—no it didn't, it was (was? is? what tense do you use for eternity?) there. Start again.

The cosmos exists—no, that hasn't got the right declamatory tone—the world, and all that is therein, is. Sounds good but doesn't really mean anything, does it? I know.

God, whom men invented because the arbitrariness of their existence was intolerable to them, is said to have created the universe in seven days. Well, we can take the seven days as figurative—but wait a minute, didn't Kierkegaard say that arbitrariness was the secret? Oh God, I don't know why I bother.

Tony Black

Now the serpent, who was like unto the manager of a garden centre, said unto Eve, The fruit of this apple is good and hath particularly fine storing qualities and is suitable for any small patio.

And Eve, who saw that the apple was good, said unto herself, It troubleth not me that God [for so she would name the gardening correspondent of the *Guardian*] hath put a prohibition on this variety.

The voice of *Gardening Which* that is within me is more potent than that of God and I shall eat whichever apple I choose, not heeding absurd warnings and edicts from a man in a white beard who is about as subtle as a beast of the field.

She took of the fruit and it was good and she agreed to take a bag of organic compost while she was at it.

Her husband Adam, who was backing up the Volvo to the exit, also took of the fruit and the eyes of them both were opened and they knew that they should change on Saturdays to the *Independent*, for its advice on arboriculture was good.

Nicholas Murray

Joshua, leader of the children of Israel, made plans to capture the city of Jericho.

He heard a voice ordering that seven priests, bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns, should march once around the city for six days.

On the seventh day, they should make the circuit seven times, and then blow their seven trumpets, at which point all the children of

GRYPH'S QUIZ

The answers all have something in common

1. Weapon
2. US SF writer
3. Pat
4. Find fault
5. Pole or rod
6. Religious leader
7. 3rd son's difference
8. Struggle
9. Quintet in A, D.667
10. Scented

Answers overleaf

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Israel should shout out loud, and the walls of the city would fall down flat.

Seven trumpet-wielding priests duly marched around the city every day for six days, and on the seventh day made seven circuits, and on completing the seventh circuit blew their seven horns, and the children of Israel gave out one great almighty shout . . .

And nothing happened.

Fortunately, Joshua had also brought with him a great battering ram, and this breached the walls nicely.

There are many examples over the following millennia of sieges won with the use of battering rams. But the good old trumpet method seems never to have been attempted again.

Paul Brummell

In the beginning was the Void, and the Void was with the Bang, and the Void was the Bang.

The same was in the beginning with the Bang.

All things were made by the Bang; and without the Bang was not anything made that was made.

In the Bang was energy, and the energy was Light.

And the Light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness absorbed it not.

There was a radiation sent from the Bang whose name was the 4K° background radiation.

The radiation was not the Bang, but was sent to bear witness of the Bang that all men through the radiation might believe. And he that believeth without that he first obtaineth an higher degree in Mathematics, yea, and an other in Theoretical Physics, verily I say unto ye, he is witless and gullible and like unto a medieval zealot; and he shall have eternal Bang in the Void.

Jay Lounaspuro

When Moses descended from the mountain, and from the smoke that was upon the mountain, he saw the children of Israel, how they danced wantonly about a golden calf. Then the anger of Moses burned hot, and he did wax with wrath, crying, Behold these tablets, O Israel, upon which the Lord hath inscribed his commandments.

And the people beheld the tablets, but they could find no commandment thereon, neither could they discern any inscription whatever.

These are blank tablets, O Moses, cried the people. For nothing is written thereon, and their surfaces are clean and shiny as the pate of Methuselah, who was ancient and a slaphead.

Nay, replied Moses, for I cried out upon the Lord to write his commandments upon these tablets, and behold, this is what he hath written. Therefore, here are the Lord's commandments, which I shall interpret to you fully in several chapters of detailed dietary regulations.

The children of Israel mocked Moses, and turned away from him. But the critics rated him highly, saying, This is conceptualism of a high order, far superior to that golden calf, which is so drearily representational.

And eventually Moses was awarded the Turner prize.

George Simmers

And seeing the crowds he went to the top of the hill and taught the multitudes the following:

Unhappy are the poor, for they shall have their dole cut.

Unhappy are the gentle, for they shall be ignored.

Unhappy are those who mourn, for they shall be called whingers.

Unhappy are those who hunger and thirst, for they shall starve.

Unhappy are the pure in heart, for they shall be called goody two shoes.

Unhappy are the peace-makers, for they shall have David Owen.

Unhappy are those who defend me, for they shall be persecuted and abused. And for what? You tell me.

Kevin Irving

No 3297 Set by Margaret Rogers

The government wants more students to read science rather than arts. Can we have haikus by 30 September to encapsulate a scientific theory or a mini biography of a famous scientist. Ms Rogers sent in a version to inspire us: Einstein's theory/Of relativity: E/Equals mc squar'd. Given that $E=mc^2$ *isn't* Einstein's theory of relativity, but a deduction from it, a jolly good try.

Quiz answers

All are all fish: 1) Pike; 2) Sturgeon; 3) Dab; 4) Carp; 5) Perch; 6) Pope; 7) Mullet; 8) Flounder; 9) Trout; 10) Smelt. Note: 5: Imperial linear units (5.5 yards); 7: Heraldry; 9: Schubert

CROSSWORD

Crossword 1670

£5 book tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1670, New Statesman & Society, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, by Monday 27 September.

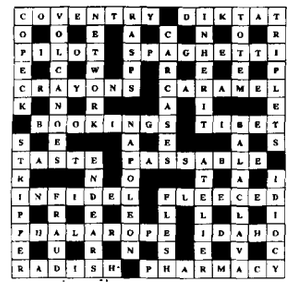
ACROSS

1. Untidy clerks keep nothing in boxes. (7)
5. Secretion a doctor injected in Kenneth. (7)
9. A vehicle which holds a small weight. (5)
10. Ballad set differently for one who works with horses. (9)
11. It occurs in menus as often as sauces. (6)
12. The journalist is one who makes changes on the street. (8)
14. Stage show for one who manages when in deep sleep. (5,5)
15. Evil point of departure. (4)
18. Otherwise making a point with an academic institution. (4)
19. Gratifyingly giving a pretext one at a time. (10)
22. A catalogue containing a weapon for a scaremonger. (8)
24. Allow an article provided for a publication. (6)
26. I put in two small amounts for a woman. (9)
27. Hunter goes on about American city. (5)
28. Be sceptical when we are given only one page in a whole school of thought. (7)
29. The man to be economical? (7)

DOWN

1. Brief of the amateur about to study. (7)
2. When the mist swirls in the wreckage of a crash. (9)
3. Part of a building to provide delight. (8)
4. Something to wear which may be seen in the window. (4)
5. Shaw's house. (10)
6. The attack surrounds the Spanish but is put down again. (6)
7. Love sign of patriotism in a prison camp. (5)
8. Approve decapitation of runner after finish. (7)
13. A ring with a faint smell, seeming like a precious stone. (10)
16. A great inn hidden away in the country. (9)
17. I make a mistake in the prizes given for entertainers. (8)
18. Scholar shows that arithmetic is looking up. (7)
20. Longed for some time back home. (7)
21. A politician enters a foreign country to create a dominion. (6)
23. Giant article in a journal. (5)
25. Irritation of doing needlework without something sharp. (4)

Solution to 1668



Winners of Crossword 1668

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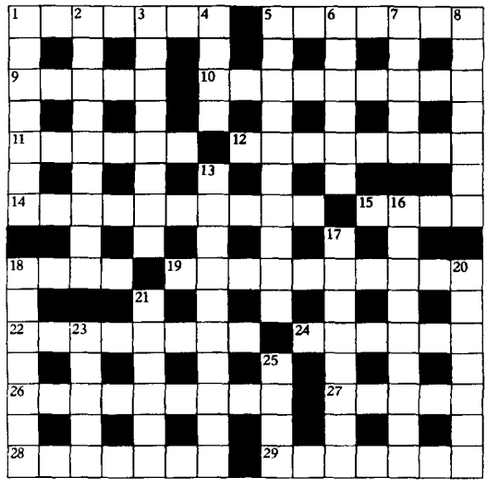
C T Boam, Edinburgh



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BACKCHAT

Mat Coward takes exception to a form of recycling

"Morning, guv'nor, dustbinmen of history. Only the thing is, have you had your dustbin of history emptied lately? See, we're running a bit behind on account of Europe and that."

"Europe?" I croaked. It was seven in the morning, I hadn't had a pee yet, let alone a cup of tea. "What's Europe got to do with it?"

"Well, that's your privatisation, innit? I mean, no offence, I don't know what your politics are you don't know what my politics are, but you don't honestly think I'd be standing on your doorstep at this time of the morning, with all the lads waiting in the van outside, if it wasn't for Europe, do you? I mean, over here it might be seven in the morning, but in Bonn it's half past eleven or ten o'clock in Paris or something."

"I'd better put some trousers on, then," I said. "I'll put the kettle on then, shall I?" he said, following me into the hall. "Only it's not actually called being dustbinmen of history any more, of course," he added. "What is it called, then?" I asked, stumbling bathroomwards. "Well that's it, innit? They haven't actually decided yet. So we thought we better just get on with it, sort of thing."

"You got a black plastic?" he said, handing me a mug of tea. "Under the sink," I replied. He got one out, and I climbed up into the loft to look for things to fill it with. There was some trade union solidarity that I'd been meaning to get rid of for ages, so I started with that.

"Better not put that in, guv," he said, from the bottom of the step-ladder. "That's down for recycling. Very hot on recycling, your Europeans." I was astonished. "But I thought solidarity was supposed to be consigned to the dustbin of history ages ago? I'm sure that's what it said in the papers."

"No, no," he said, shaking his head. "No offence, mate, but you're well behind the times there. I mean, you think about it: all the stuff that's been consigned to the dustbin of history these last few years—Marxism, Monetarism, Mixed Economy, Welfare State—where do you suppose it all ends up? In historical landfills, that's where, disfiguring the scenery."

"So now it all has to be recycled instead?" I said, beginning to catch on. "Exactly. Of course, the original substance loses some of its strength and purity during the recycling process. Bound to. Like, your recycled solidarity, that's not going to be recognisable as such to you or me. They'll just extract the basic ingredients to make something more modern. A handy little speech to a conference, say, or a couple of smooth lines in a manifesto."

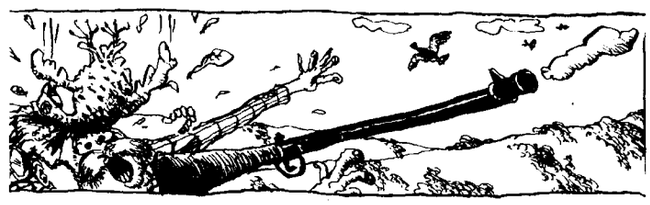
"Right," I said, "so you won't be wanting this old packing-case full of socialism?"

He sucked his teeth, thoughtfully. "Best not, guv. Thing is, you never know what they might find a use for next, innit? By the by," he added, "you don't mind me saying 'innit', I hope. I know it makes me sound like an Attenborough walk-on, but it's about all I've got left of me working-class identity, what with Europe and privatisation and not being called dustbinmen any more and that."

"Not at all," I assured him. "It suits you. Anyway, cheer up—perhaps they'll recycle proletarianism next. After all, what comes around goes around, innit?"

At this, he smiled and shook my hand warmly. "That's a good 'un, that is, squire! Goes round comes round, eh? Yes indeed, very nicely put, the lads in the van will love that one . . . "

FORTEANA



Why do all the wife-forgetting yarns come from the recent past, asks Paul Sieveking

After sifting through clippings of odd news for many years, one develops an eye for "filler folklore", the story that's just too good to run once and which impish newsmen recycle with a few salient details altered.

On 1 October 1989, the daily *Sovietskaya Rossiya* told its readers how psychic healer E Frenkel had been run down by a freight-train near Astrakhan, 800 miles south-east of Moscow. A note in his briefcase explained that he believed his "psychic-biological powers" capable of stopping the train.

In August 1992, the same story appeared in the Chinese *Liberation Daily*. Wei, 22, testing his mastery of the mystical art of *qi gong*, had tried to stop a freight train outside Shanghai—and failed.

Then there are the wife-forgetting yarns. A French tourist drove 200 miles before realising he had left his wife at a motorway service station. The 32-year-old had stopped off on the M6 near Carlisle for a wash, but set off again, not noticing his wife had nipped to the loo. He returned eight hours later, after a 400-mile round trip to Birmingham. He thought she was asleep in the caravanette. (Most papers, 17 April 1993.)

This story was very similar to an AP item from 12 May 1992. In this tale of woe, the couple was driving from Delaware home to Colorado, and he left her by mistake in Rostraver Township (western Pennsylvania).

It took four hours to realise his mistake, whereupon he headed back to Pennsylvania . . . but hit a deer just west of Wheeling, West Virginia, and disabled the van. He walked to the nearest truck stop and told police his problem. State troopers in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio drove his wife in shifts to the truck stop, where the two were reunited. No report was filed; and Officer Robert Glass who told the story to the press could not recall the couple's names.

Here are two more such yarns from the intervening months. A husband drove for six hours, arriving home near Milan, before realising he'd left his wife at a motorway service cafe 450 miles back. He told police that his wife normally sat in the back and talked non-stop. "I never listened to her, so I didn't notice she wasn't with me." (*Daily Mirror*, 27 August 1992.)

Norwegian motorist Lars Thongruen, 35, noticed he had left his wife behind at a gas station after only 30 miles, but he couldn't remember where the gas station was. When he arrived home, she was waiting for him, having hitched a lift. "I didn't miss her because she's not a big talker," he said. (*Wolverhampton Express & Star*, 4 January 1993.)

In an item from the *Middlesbrough Evening Gazette* (21 December 1992), it's the driver's mother, rather than his wife, who is left in the service station. This one is set in New South Wales, Australia, and the mother had been asleep in the back of the car and got out for a spot of nocturnal urination. Police caught up with the son after 30 miles.

If these five yarns are true, the similarity of detail is uncanny. What makes me suspicious is that they all come from the past 16 months, and I can't recall earlier examples of this type in 16 years of scanning bizarre clippings. Notice that none of the protagonists is named, with the exception of the dubious Norwegian. Naturally, I am making no hard-and-fast pronouncement on the subject; there's always the possibility that recent months have been earmarked by the cosmic joker as passenger-forgetting time.

Here's a story, for instance, that strikes me as convincing: Thomas Brown was driving to the seaside with his wife Catherine in their Skoda on 29 August 1992. The clutch burned out on the M5 at Clevedon, near Bristol. Mr Brown, a retired rail worker of 73, hobbled off on his two walking-sticks to seek help.

Five hours later, police found Mrs Brown, 84, still sitting in the Skoda on the hard shoulder. Her husband had taken a bus to Bristol and a train home to Tewkesbury, 70 miles away. "I suppose I must have got confused," he said. "I was very surprised when the police turned up." (*Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mirror*, 31 August 1992.)

Paul Sieveking is editor of "Fortean Times"

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